



MASTERARBEIT | MASTER'S THESIS

Titel | Title

Yesterday's News: Churchill's Repurposing of War
Correspondence in My Early Life

verfasst von | submitted by

Lisa Rommel B.A.

angestrebter akademischer Grad | in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts (MA)

Wien | Vienna, 2026

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt | Degree
programme code as it appears on the
student record sheet:

UA 066 844

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt | Degree
programme as it appears on the student
record sheet:

Masterstudium Anglophone Literatures and Cultures

Betreut von | Supervisor:

Assoz. Prof. Mag. Dr. Julia Lajta-Novak M.A.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Churchill's Literature and Literature on Churchill	5
2.1 Biography and Body of Work	5
2.2 Reading Churchill: A Survey of Previous Scholarship	10
3. A Web of Relations: Intertextuality, Genre, and Life Writing	14
3.1 Intertextuality and the Logic of Self-Citation	14
3.2 Genre Dynamics and Hybridisation	19
3.3 Autobiographical Identity between Text and Genre	23
4. Hybrid Temporality and the Revival of the Past	28
4.1 "The True Path of Chronology": Time and Narrative Structure	29
4.2 "A Picture of a Vanished Age": Nostalgic Past and Present	36
5. Truth in Times of War	44
5.1 Memory, Self-Citation, and the Construction of Credibility	47
5.2 Editing the Past: The Impact of (Self-)Censorship	52
6. Depicting War and the Correspondent	60
6.1 "A Sporting Element in a Splendid Game": Writing War	61
6.2 The War Correspondent as Imperial Hero	68
7. Conclusion	74
8. Works Cited	77
8.1 Primary Literature	77
8.2 Secondary Literature	77
9. Appendix	82
9.1 Bibliography of War Correspondence by Winston Churchill	82
9.2 Abstracts	85

1. Introduction

Winston Churchill's legacy is rarely associated with his literary works. Although he was an extraordinarily prolific writer and received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1953, his writing has attracted surprisingly little critical scrutiny. Peter Clarke deems him "the most famous unknown author of the twentieth century" (ix). While his writing has been largely forgotten, Churchill himself is not.

Decades after his death in 1965, Churchill's presence in today's Britain is still keenly felt. His image has been commercialised by a thriving "Churchill industry" and popular culture continues to revisit his life in films and television series, such as *Churchill* (2017), Netflix's *The Crown* (2016), and *Darkest Hour* (2017) (Hassan 69). Churchill's legacy has also been politically appropriated: during the Brexit campaign, both pro-European and Eurosceptic groups claimed his support for their causes (Hassan 74; Fielding et al. 8). Contemporary politicians, such as former prime minister Boris Johnson, author of a Churchill biography, align themselves with Churchill's image (Hassan 75; Fielding et al. 19–20). Critical voices notwithstanding, Churchill has taken on a mythical status, symbolising wartime heroism during Britain's "Finest Hour" (Hassan 68; Fielding et al. 75). More broadly, he is frequently invoked as a nostalgic symbol of a lost and idealised Britain (Hassan 78) and has become "a highly charged figure through whom many Britons imagine their relationship with their past, present, and future" (Fielding et al. 1). The foundations for these symbolic dimensions were laid by Churchill himself, who actively forged his own mythical reputation through his writing (Fielding et al. 11, 33–34, 76).

A close study of Churchill's literary work, particularly his memoir *My Early Life: A Roving Commission* (1930), thus promises to illuminate how Churchill crafted the persona that continues to resonate today. Although Churchill's biography has been scrutinised in depth, *My Early Life* has not yet been systematically studied from a literary perspective. Despite being considered Churchill's best book (Clarke 79; Alldritt 101), "his most charming work" (Weidhorn 106) and his "most popular and widely read" book (Woods, *Artillery* 122), the memoir is usually dismissed as shallow (Weidhorn 106; Woods, *Artillery* 123) and deemed unworthy of serious critical analysis. Yet, I contend that the memoir occupies a distinctive position in Churchill's literary oeuvre and warrants closer scrutiny. It is Churchill's most overtly autobiographical work (Sell 240) and thus crucial for understanding Churchill's

narrative self-fashioning, particularly because it revisits his formative years and origins as a writer. Churchill's writing career began as a war correspondent in several imperial wars, and *My Early Life* reworks and condenses this early journalism into a self-portrait. As a writer, Churchill is known for repurposing his texts across different genres; his correspondence also served as source material for several campaign histories (Woods, *War Correspondent* xxxi; Toye, "Golden Age" 155). His repurposing of war dispatches in *My Early Life*, however, has not been studied, despite its important role in Churchill's self-portrayal.

In this thesis, I examine Churchill's memoir in relation to the war letters he wrote for the *Daily Graphic*, the *Daily Telegraph*, and the *Morning Post* between 1895 and 1900, as well as to the broader genre of war correspondence. Victorian war correspondence belongs to a distinct genre tradition with particular conventions that later resurface in *My Early Life*. Although it is personal in nature, many of its genre characteristics clash with autobiographical norms of retrospective insight and authenticity, particularly its fast-paced immediacy, censorship and ideological agenda, and the formulaic depiction of imperial warfare and the special correspondent persona. In my analysis, I focus on these points of friction in order to assess the effects of this generic hybridity. The central question guiding this study is how Churchill's war journalism shapes his memoir and the persona it constructs. I argue that by repurposing his dispatches and the conventions of Victorian war correspondence, Churchill creates a heroic autobiographical persona and a nostalgic vision of Britain's imperial past.

To examine how Churchill integrates his war journalism into *My Early Life*, I adopt a theoretical framework that combines intertextuality theory, genre theory, and life writing studies. Intertextuality theory posits that a literary text is not self-contained, but connected to the "systems, codes and traditions of other art forms and of culture in general" (Allen 1). Meaning is produced through such intertextual relations rather than being inherent in the text itself. On this basis, I conceptualise *My Early Life* not as an isolated memoir but as in dialogue with Churchill's war journalism and, by extension, with the genre of war correspondence. Intertextuality theory thus provides the vocabulary for analysing how Churchill's memoir references and borrows from his own journalistic writing. Genre theory contributes a framework for analysing how such intertextual borrowings function within and across literary forms. Genre is now understood as "a key mode of intertextuality" (Gray 210) and, conversely, intertextuality as a driving factor in the dynamic relationships among genres

(Juvan 71). Contemporary genre theory emphasises that the boundaries between genres are fluid and dynamic, and that texts frequently occupy hybrid positions (Couser, “Genre Matters” 141). This insight is central to my thesis; it allows me to investigate how *My Early Life* negotiates between the conventions of memoir and those of war correspondence, and how this hybridity shapes Churchill’s self-portrayal. Lastly, life writing studies demonstrate how autobiographical selves are constructed through discursive conventions and intertextual processes. Churchill’s narrated past and autobiographical persona, as this thesis argues, cannot be understood outside the realm of genre.

Throughout this thesis, I refer to *My Early Life* as a memoir rather than an autobiography. Both fall under the umbrella term “life writing,” which is “used to refer to all nonfictional representation of identity” (Couser, *Memoir* 24), but they differ in scope and emphasis. Whereas autobiographies aim to capture a person’s entire life in its full breadth, memoirs are more selective, focusing on a particular period, event, or dimension of a life (23–24). *My Early Life* fits this definition; the narrative’s time frame is confined to Churchill’s formative years, and his experiences as a soldier and war correspondent dominate the account. Although the distinction between autobiography and memoir is not entirely clear-cut in practice, the selective scope and thematic focus of Churchill’s narrative justify treating *My Early Life* as a memoir.

With these definitions in place, the following chapters proceed from context to close analysis. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the relevant period in Churchill’s biography, introduces the corpus of primary materials, and reviews previous scholarship on his literary oeuvre. Chapter 3 lays the theoretical groundwork by drawing together intertextuality, genre theory, and life writing. I explore the interrelatedness of texts and genres and show how autobiographical subjects are constituted through such intertextual processes. These insights frame my genre-based comparative close reading of *My Early Life*, where I trace the influence of the war correspondence genre on Churchill’s self-representation. Chapter 4 explores the memoir’s temporal hybridity, from overarching structure to linguistic detail, revealing how the temporality of war reporting impacts the portrayal of Churchill’s past and persona. Chapter 5 turns to questions of autobiographical truth and censorship, analysing moments in which correspondence serves as authentication and comparing alternative versions of events to probe the compromised truth status of Churchill’s source material. Chapter 6 builds on this

analysis by examining the resurfacing of war correspondence tropes and the correspondent-as-hero archetype in Churchill's memoir. Together, these chapters move from form to truth status to thematic content, thereby offering a comprehensive analysis of Churchill's memoir.

By reading *My Early Life* in relation to Churchill's early war correspondence, this thesis shows how the heroic persona and nostalgic vision at the core of his enduring public image are shaped by the genres he employs. In doing so, it provides a systematic literary analysis of a neglected yet pivotal text and demonstrates how Churchill engineered the foundations of his own myth.

2. Churchill's Literature and Literature on Churchill

2.1 Biography and Body of Work

Today, the details of Churchill's early life are not widely known. According to William Manchester, one of Churchill's biographers, "[h]is career passed through three stages: from 1900 to 1915, when his star rose to a dizzy height; from then until 1940, when he achieved little and failed often; and from Dunkirk to the end, when he became a legend" (20). It is possible, however, to identify an earlier stage in Churchill's career: his service as a cavalry subaltern in the British Army beginning in 1894, and his work as a war correspondent from 1895 to 1900. During this time, Churchill was actively committed to crafting a reputation and preparing his entry into politics (Clarke 50; Woods, *Artillery* 26). His early career afforded him considerable fame and popularity (Williams, *New History* 8) and is recounted in *My Early Life* (1930), written during his period of professional setbacks. The following pages contextualise Churchill's early literary output through a brief biographical overview and discuss the corpus of war correspondence that forms the basis of my analysis of *My Early Life*.

Churchill decided to pursue a military career during his final years at Harrow School and was admitted to the Royal Military College at Sandhurst in 1893, following two unsuccessful prior attempts (Manchester 175–82). In his memoir, Churchill half-ironically attributes this choice of profession to his childhood fascination with toy soldiers, as well as his unsatisfactory grades at school and his father's low expectations of his future academic prospects (*My Early Life* 27–28; hereafter *MEL*). Nevertheless, Churchill enjoyed his military education and became "an eager student of war" (Manchester 193). Upon graduation, he was commissioned as a cavalry subaltern into the Fourth Hussars (210). While still in training, he searched for any opportunity to gain hands-on combat experience and military prestige (*MEL* 83). As he recounts in his memoir, this was a time of relative peace and "[t]he want of a sufficient supply of active service was therefore acutely felt" (*MEL* 84). In Cuba, however, an ongoing guerrilla war was fought between the Spanish army and Cuban rebels. Taking advantage of his family's high social standing and connections, Churchill was able to obtain permission to accompany the Spanish army for two weeks (Manchester 223; Toye, "Golden Age" 158). He furthermore arranged to report as a war correspondent to the *Daily Graphic*, which paid five guineas for each of the five letters he sent from Cuba and thus allowed him to

contribute to his expenses (Manchester 222–23). The letters, which were published between December 1895 and January 1896, are signed “WSC” and mark the beginning of Churchill’s career as a professional writer (R. Churchill 604).

In September 1896, the Fourth Hussars sailed to India, where they were permanently stationed near Bangalore (Manchester 234, 237). Here, Churchill initially enjoyed a comfortable life of routine drills and ample leisure time (239–40). Yet, his biographer notes that this novelty soon wore off, as Churchill again yearned for the dangers and prestige of active service (246). That opportunity arose in 1897, when three brigades of the British army, commanded by General Sir Bindon Blood, were mobilised to suppress an uprising by native tribes on India’s North-West frontier (250). The conflict was a result of Britain’s “forward policy,” designed to consolidate imperial control and counter Russian influence in the region (Toye, *Riddle of the Frontier* 494). Because Churchill was personally acquainted with Blood, he was allowed to join as a correspondent during his summer leave from the Hussars, as there were no vacancies left in the army (Manchester 250–51). His mother negotiated contracts with both the *Daily Telegraph*, which offered to pay Churchill five pounds per letter, and the Allahabad *Pioneer* newspaper in India, which would publish his daily 300-word telegrams (251). Churchill’s total correspondence for the *Telegraph* comprises fifteen letters, published between October and December 1897 under the heading “The War in the Indian Highlands” and signed “From a Young Officer”. The newspaper editor had objected to printing Churchill’s name since the letters were perceived to be controversial (259) – despite his low military rank, Churchill had dared to publicise his personal opinions on Britain’s contentious forward policy (Toye, “Golden Age” 162). Churchill was displeased and wrote to his mother: “I will not conceal my disappointment at their being not signed. I had written them with the design, a design which took form as the correspondence advanced, of bringing my personality before the electorate” (qtd. in Manchester 259). Yet, his mother made his authorship widely known, and Churchill’s pursuit of publicity provoked disgruntlement within the army (259–60). In Manchester’s view, this was not unmerited, since Churchill “had no interest in a military career, and meant to use the service to enhance his prospects in public life” (260). Following the suppression of the revolt, Churchill actively sought out new imperial conflicts that could provide material for his writing.

In 1898, the British reconquest of the Sudan had reached its final stage and Churchill was eager to join (263). This time, however, he faced considerable obstacles. Sir Herbert Kitchener, the general in charge, strongly opposed Churchill's involvement on the grounds of his previous writing (263). It took a considerable effort on Churchill's and his mother's part – including the involvement of both the Prince of Wales and the Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury – for Churchill to obtain the necessary permission (263–66). He was allowed to join the 21st Lancers, provided that he would pay for his own expenses (266). Churchill then contacted Oliver Borthwick of the *Morning Post* and was offered fifteen pounds for every letter he sent from the Sudan (266). These were again printed anonymously since Kitchener's disdain for war correspondents was well-known and Churchill feared the possibility of being recalled (Manchester 266; Griffiths, "Imperial Romance" 167–68). Churchill went so far as to camouflage his correspondence as private letters addressed to "Oliver" (Manchester 266), under the pretence that the letters, as the newspaper announces, were "received by a Correspondent from a friend in the Nile Expeditionary Force" (Wilson 143). The last of Churchill's letters is boldly signed WINSTON SPENCER CHURCHILL, finally revealing the author's identity (146).

After his return from the Sudan, Churchill left the army to pursue a career in politics, making an unsuccessful bid for parliament in 1899. He had decided to campaign as a Tory candidate for the Oldham constituency, but lost to his opponent (Manchester 289–91). By then, his writing had become a lucrative source of income. Although he was born into nobility, Churchill faced financial constraints in maintaining his aristocratic lifestyle. As he recounts, his father's passing in 1895 had not left a large inheritance since debts consumed almost the entire estate (*MEL* 210). Military service only offered modest compensation, and a political career would demand more resources than it provided, given that the Conservative Party expected financial contributions from its members (Manchester 286). His writing, however, paid well and would continue to remain a major source of income throughout Churchill's life (Clarke xiv, xvii). In a private letter, Churchill reasons: "I can live cheaper & earn more as a writer, special correspondent or journalist: and this work is moreover more congenial and more likely to assist me in pursuing the larger ends of life" (qtd. in Manchester 286). In 1899, he therefore travelled to South Africa to report on the Boer War. The *Morning Post* now paid him a monthly wage of 250 pounds, which, according to Churchill, was

“higher . . . than any previously paid in British journalism to war-correspondents” (*MEL* 243). Between November 1899 and July 1900, the newspaper printed thirty-eight of Churchill’s letters alongside a series of shorter telegrams. They were published under the headline “War Letter” and bylined “From Winston Churchill: Our Special Correspondent”. His correspondence, as well as his own actions – such as his capture and escape as a prisoner of war – made him a celebrity and paved the way for his entry into parliament in 1900 (Griffiths, “Imperial Romance” 164; Williams, *New History* 8). His journalism also provided material for several later publications.

Aside from Churchill’s own repurposed compilations of his correspondence in his campaign histories *The Story of the Malakand Field Force* (1898), *The River War* (1899), *London to Ladysmith via Pretoria* (1900) and *Ian Hamilton’s March* (1900), Churchill’s war letters have since been reprinted in two anthologies by Frederick Woods: *Young Winston’s Wars: The Original Despatches of Winston S. Churchill* (1972) and *Winston S. Churchill: War Correspondent 1895–1900* (1992). The earlier collection comprises Churchill’s correspondence from India and a selection of letters from the Sudan and South Africa. The second anthology is a revised edition that also includes the despatches from Cuba and covers approximately two-thirds of Churchill’s overall correspondence (*War Correspondent* xxxi). Since both collections are incomplete, they are of limited merit for this thesis. What is more, Woods admits to a rather invasive editorship, including the removal of all headlines and sub-headings as well as “reparagraphing”, de-capitalisation, and corrections of grammar and punctuation (xxx). Churchill’s Cuban correspondence has also been collected in *The Churchill Documents: Youth 1874–1896*, edited by his son Randolph Churchill. To date, there is no complete anthology of Churchill’s war journalism.

For the purpose of this thesis, I have, where possible, consulted scans of the original newspaper pages. While these printed dispatches were inevitably shaped by editorial intervention, too, they provide the closer access to Churchill’s original writings and may represent the very materials he subsequently reworked in his memoir. Digital copies of Churchill’s correspondence for the *Daily Telegraph* and *Morning Post* can be accessed through the *British Newspaper Archive*. Copies of the *Daily Telegraph* are also available via the *Telegraph Historical Archive*. In the case of Churchill’s correspondence for the *Daily Graphic*, I have consulted the aforementioned anthologies. I have been able to locate all of

Churchill's correspondence with the help of two bibliographies: Woods's *A Bibliography of the Works of Sir Winston Churchill* (1975), and Ronald Cohen's three-volume *Bibliography of the Writings of Sir Winston Churchill* (2006), which is the most comprehensive bibliography of Churchill's writing. A chronological list of Churchill's early newspaper articles can be found in the appendix to this thesis.

My study of Churchill's war correspondence in relation to *My Early Life* is restricted to letters published in the *Daily Graphic*, the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Morning Post*. I have excluded his private correspondence, which is not relevant to the purpose of my thesis, as well as Churchill's correspondence for the *Pioneer*. Apart from accessibility constraints, this is because the *Pioneer*, as previously mentioned, only published Churchill's 300-word telegrams. Due to their restricted length, the writing style of telegrams is by necessity more sparse and economical compared to the "more descriptive and impressionistic 'letters'" (Toye, "Golden Age" 158). Accordingly, telegrams do not reflect the literary style of war reporting on which Churchill's memoir draws. Moreover, it can be expected that the telegrams sent to the *Pioneer* reported on the same events as Churchill's letters to the *Daily Telegraph*. Churchill's telegrams to the *Morning Post* during the Boer War, which were published alongside his longer correspondence, have been excluded from this study for the same reason. During his years as a war correspondent, Churchill also published miscellaneous articles in other newspapers, some of which were republications of his correspondence (Toye, "Golden Age" 155; Cohen, vol. 2). These, too, lie beyond the scope of this thesis, as I focus on the newspapers with which Churchill established a contractual relationship and base readership. Lastly, there are minor inconsistencies in the attribution of some anonymous reports from the Sudan to Churchill's authorship, which are flagged in the bibliography that accompanies this thesis. In my analysis of Churchill's writing, I have focused on texts where his authorship has been established beyond doubt. These restrictions, along with the inaccessibility of original prints of the *Daily Graphic*, present possible limitations to this study. Nevertheless, the corpus remains sufficiently extensive to enable a thorough analysis of Churchill's war correspondence and its subsequent repurposing in his memoir. The following section examines previous scholarship on Churchill's writing and demonstrates how this thesis contributes new insights to the field.

2.2 Reading Churchill: A Survey of Previous Scholarship

Throughout his writing career spanning more than six decades, Churchill was an extraordinarily prolific author. His literary output encompasses about fifty books, more than five hundred articles, and hundreds of speeches and state documents, amounting to a total of over eight million words (Weidhorn 1; Woods, *Artillery* 1). His diverse body of work ranges from journalism, essays and speech anthologies, to a novel, short stories, travel writing, biographies, histories, memoirs, as well as introductions and forewords, a film script, and miscellany such as battle-themed puzzle notes (Weidhorn 1; Woods, *Artillery* 1). Yet, his writing has not received much critical scrutiny (Griffiths, “Imperial Romance” 164).

One possible explanation is his immense political and historical legacy, which, according to some scholars, has “overshadowed” his literary contributions (Alkon xi; Clarke ix; Alldritt vii). As Paul Alkon observes, the majority of the scholarship on Churchill has been conducted by historians and political scientists, who examine his writings primarily as sources for understanding his political views and his role in major events (xi). Another reason for this apparent neglect, according to Alkon, may be a matter of genre. Most of Churchill’s literature is political or served political rather than literary purposes, and his preferred genres were “forms that many regard as offering little scope for invention” (xi). Consequently, Alkon believes that “[f]ew critics have deemed these genres fashionable enough to warrant much notice, or amenable to their favorite methods of commentary” (xi). This assessment is shared by Herbert Howarth, who, in a short essay on Churchill’s writing style, argues “that the deficiency of Churchill’s best writing is a deficiency of genre: he writes the literature of the Parliamentarian” (556). Other critics, such as Manfred Weidhorn and Frederick Woods, question the literary and historical merit of Churchill’s writing, finding it verbose, archaic, and lacking in academic rigour (Weidhorn 234–38; Woods, *Artillery* 152). Nevertheless, a small group of scholars has contributed to a more serious academic consideration of Churchill’s literary contributions.

The remainder of this chapter provides an overview of what has been the focus of critical attention so far, moving from more general assessments of his oeuvre to particular analyses of the works relevant to my thesis. Since I intend to examine how Churchill crafted his public image through his writing, this review focuses on scholarship on Churchill’s published writings, excluding both his speeches and private correspondence.

With the exception of Churchill's famous World War II speeches, Churchill's literature has generally been approached in a cursory manner, rather than through in-depth studies of particular texts. Surveys of Churchill's oeuvre have been published by Woods (1992), Alldritt (1992), Weidhorn (1974), Alkon (2006), Clarke (2012), and Rose (2014). Due to Churchill's immense literary output, these surveys are by necessity selective, highlighting specific works at the expense of others. Among all of his texts, Churchill's biographies¹ and histories² have received the most attention in studies of his literary oeuvre. This reflects the predominantly historical interest in his work. *My Early Life* is rarely mentioned and frequently dismissed as "an essentially lightweight but sunny delight" (Woods, *Artillery* 123), "a delightful little classic" (Weidhorn 235) and "a delicious warm bath of imperial nostalgia" (Rose 219). On the whole, studies of Churchill's writing prioritise biographical and historical context over in-depth literary analysis, aiming to better understand Churchill's political motives (Woods, Rose), psyche (Weidhorn), or creative mind (Alkon). Churchill's writing career has also been approached from a more strictly biographical perspective, with Keith Alldritt and Peter Clarke exploring Churchill's literary influences, economic dependence on writing, and methods of compiling and drafting texts. Among these studies, Weidhorn's stands out as he successfully identifies recurrent themes in Churchill's body of work. Crucially, he shows that all of Churchill's non-fiction books, including his histories and biographies, are fundamentally autobiographical (6). This insight adds to the picture of Churchill as an author merging genres and moulding the memoir genre to suit his needs.

A small number of rather recent publications focus on Churchill's war correspondence, indicating that his earlier writing has been the focus of some, albeit limited, renewed attention. Churchill's war correspondence has primarily been approached through the lens of technological change and the development of the press. Andrew Griffiths (2013) provides a thorough and convincing analysis of Churchill's correspondence from the Sudan. He shows how changing technologies of communication and industrial warfare impacted the profession of war correspondents and challenged the romanticised narratives of imperial expansion. For

¹ Such as Churchill's biography of his father, *Lord Randolph Churchill* (2 vols., 1906); of his ancestor, *Marlborough: His Life and Times* (4 vols., 1933–38); and *Great Contemporaries* (1937).

² Including his aforementioned campaign histories: *The Story of the Malakand Field Force* (1898), *The River War* (2 vols., 1899), *London to Ladysmith via Pretoria* (1900), and *Ian Hamilton's March* (1900); his histories of the two World Wars: *The World Crisis* (6 vols., 1923–31) and *The Second World War* (6 vols., 1948–53); and *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples* (4 vols., 1956–58).

Griffiths, the Sudan campaign constitutes a turning point in the relationship between New Journalism and New Imperialism (“Imperial Romance” 164–6), which manifests in Churchill’s war letters from Omdurman (170–8). Richard Toye (2011) provides a historical study of Churchill’s correspondence from India and *The Story of the Malakand Field Force*, analysing his rhetorical strategy of defending the British forward policy. In two subsequent publications (2019, 2020), he examines the development of journalism and news culture during Churchill’s lifetime, arguing that Churchill was capable of using the emergent mass media to his own advantage (“Golden Age” 154). In contrast to Griffiths, who emphasises the decline of the imperialist New Journalism, Toye regards the news culture of Churchill’s time as a mostly “golden age” of opportunity that allowed Churchill to shape his public reputation (“Golden Age” 165–67).

To date, critical analysis focusing specifically on *My Early Life* is limited to just two academic articles. Charles Sullivan (2010) posits that the memoir’s engaging storytelling may have deterred serious scholarship, with most critics deeming it an “ephemeral” work (2). Yet, Sullivan argues that critics have underestimated the complexity of the memoir (1) and provides an analysis of *My Early Life* in the context of Churchill’s political philosophy of Whiggism. He disputes a previous assessment of the memoir put forward by David Cannadine (1994), who views the memoir through the lens of aristocratic decline and nostalgia for a past social order (Cannadine 150–51). According to Sullivan, the memoir is “not a retreat into untimeliness or a consolation for failure” (3) but a motivational work, seeking to inspire younger readers to defend British democratic values during a period of growing authoritarian influence (6, 22–23). Roger Sell (2011) doubts that *My Early Life* serves any political purpose (248), arguing that “the level of Churchill’s own remaining political ambition during his early wilderness years is far from clear” (248). Instead, Sell regards the memoir as a nuanced and critical reflection on the past, in which Churchill bridges different historical perspectives and ideologies and enters into a dialogue with his readers. Despite the memoir’s imperialist rhetoric, Sell finds it “ethically unimpeachable”, claiming that Churchill destabilises his younger self’s views through self-mockery (247, 257). Sell’s study, however, lacks impartiality as Churchill’s mythical legacy as a “man of destiny” that “save[d] the entire world” (256) frequently impinges on his analysis. To mediate between these different interpretations of the work, a less biographically informed textual analysis is needed.

Although scholars acknowledge that Churchill frequently recycled his writing (see, for instance, Toye, “Golden Age” 155), the intertextual repurposing of his journalism in *My Early Life* remains unexplored. This constitutes a gap in the field that invites closer scrutiny, particularly when considering the memoir’s place in Churchill’s body of work. While it has been established that autobiographical elements can be found throughout Churchill’s oeuvre, *My Early Life* is his most predominantly autobiographical work (Sell 240). Examining how Churchill reworks his early journalism in his memoir not only improves our understanding of him as a memoirist, but also reveals the strategies through which he fashioned his evolving literary and public persona across different genres. By foregrounding these literary dynamics, my thesis departs from the field’s predominantly biographical focus and positions *My Early Life* as a key text for rethinking Churchill’s authorial practice. Before moving on to my close reading of the memoir, the following chapter establishes a theoretical framework comprised of intertextuality theory, genre theory, and life writing studies.

3. A Web of Relations: Intertextuality, Genre, and Life Writing

In *My Early Life*, Churchill draws extensively on his earlier war letters and the broader convention of the war correspondence genre. His textual borrowings vary in scope, ranging from a few words (specific descriptions or metaphors, for instance) to near-verbatim reproduction of entire passages. Such acts of self-citation are rarely acknowledged within the memoir itself and often remain indiscernible without direct textual comparison. Elsewhere, Churchill reworks his earlier writings more freely, using them as generic templates for constructing his hybrid autobiographical persona. As this thesis argues, this autobiographical reworking of journalistic texts can be productively understood through the lenses of intertextuality and genre.

This chapter establishes the conceptual and analytical premise that informs my analysis of Churchill's texts, moving from (1) intertextuality and auto-intertextuality to (2) genre as a dynamic system and intertextual practice, and (3) life writing and the construction of the autobiographical self. While these frameworks are discussed in separate subsections for clarity, they are deeply interconnected and mutually constitutive perspectives on textuality, convention, and identity. The following subchapters highlight these interrelations and outline how they inform my subsequent analysis of *My Early Life* and Churchill's war correspondence.

3.1 Intertextuality and the Logic of Self-Citation

The term "intertextuality," as Graham Allen notes, is rather ambiguous and encompasses a range of theoretical positions (2). Scholars frequently distinguish between two major theoretical conceptualisations of intertextuality: a broad, poststructuralist perspective that views intertextuality as a universal and all-encompassing aspect of textuality, and a more narrow, structuralist approach that typically defines intertextuality as the intentional and discernible references of a text to other texts (Pfister, "Konzepte der Intertextualität" 25; Isekenmeier et al. 1–3; Broich, "Formen der Markierung" 31). This subchapter provides a brief genealogy of the concept, moving from its poststructural origins to more specific types of intertextuality that account for Churchill's mostly covert self-citations in *My Early Life*.

The origins of intertextuality theory trace back to Julia Kristeva's rereading of Mikhail Bakhtin's socially situated theory of language (Allen 3, 11, 16). Bakhtin observes that spoken

language is employed in particular social settings, in which all utterances build on previous utterances, while also generating new responses (Allen 17–19). Accordingly, “[o]ne cannot understand an utterance or even a written work as if it were singular in meaning, unconnected to previous and future utterances or works” (18). For Bakhtin, this is what constitutes the relational nature of language and what he terms ‘dialogism’ (Allen 19). The situational context or “speech genre” also impacts word choice, so that language is inevitably coloured by its prior uses (20): “Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life” (Bakhtin 293). These ideas form the foundation for subsequent developments in intertextuality theory, especially in Kristeva’s work.

The term “intertextuality” was coined in the 1960s by Kristeva, who transformed Bakhtin’s theories into a poststructuralist framework (Allen 3). Poststructuralism marked a shift from the previous trust in scientific neutrality and reason toward embracing “uncertainty, indeterminacy, incommunicability, subjectivity, desire, pleasure and play” (3). Accordingly, intertextuality was introduced as a concept that challenged the idea that texts have single, definitive meanings that can be objectively determined (3). Whereas Bakhtin emphasised the social context of utterances, Kristeva develops a more abstract theory that privileges ‘text’ and ‘textuality’ over human agents (35). According to Kristeva, relational processes occur within texts, which respond to other texts and to broader cultural contexts (Allen 35). Kristeva views the text not as the unique creation of an author but as a compilation, comprising “all the different discourses, ways of speaking and saying, institutionally sanctioned structures and systems which make up what we call culture” (Allen 35). Each text thus inherently reflects society’s ideological struggles and can never possess a stable, unified meaning (34–36).

This notion of intertextuality fundamentally changes the reception of literary texts; it “promotes a new vision of meaning, and thus of authorship and reading: a vision resistant to ingrained notions of originality, uniqueness, singularity and autonomy” (Allen 6). Texts are no longer treated as isolated, but as interconnected. This insight is crucial for my reading of *My Early Life* as a text that is not self-contained but exists in relation to previous texts and genres. However, Kristeva’s vision has been criticised for disregarding the specific contexts in which literary texts occur, such as genres or the canon (Allen 55–56; Duff 60). As Allen summarises, Kristeva “makes literature part of general cultural discourse and ends up unable to describe literature, its history and its response to ideological and cultural conflicts and debates” (56).

This is a major limitation for the purpose of my thesis, since I argue that genre fundamentally shapes Churchill's self-fashioning. Additionally, the broad conceptualisation of intertextuality has often been deemed too abstract to serve as a practical tool for analysing individual texts (Isekenmeier et al. 3). Consequently, structuralists sought to develop a more operational theory of intertextuality that would allow for systematic analysis and clear, reliable interpretations of texts (Allen 4, 94). Narrow conceptualisations of intertextuality are concerned with the forms and functions of relations between texts and proceed in a classificatory and typological manner (Isekenmeier et al. 1). Within such typologies, Churchill's covert self-borrowings constitute a rarely discussed form of intertextual reference. The concept of auto-intertextuality allows me to theorise this phenomenon without reducing it to plagiarism or mere repetition.

Although an author's reuse of their own writing can be treated as a special case of intertextuality, this concept has not received much attention and there is no consistent terminology for references to texts by the same author (Isekenmeier et al. 8). As Isekenmeier et al. note, the terms 'autotextuality' and 'intratextuality' are sometimes used interchangeably for references within a single text, whilst other scholars use the former term for references within one text and the latter for references across an author's body of work (8). Following Isekenmeier et al., I adopt the term 'auto-intertextuality' ("Auto-Intertextualität") for relations between texts by the same author (44–45). According to Isekenmeier et al., auto-intertextuality can occur between genetically linked texts, such as different drafts or stages of a text's development, as well as between distinct works by the same author (44). What they term 'genetic auto-intertextuality' ("genetische Auto-Intertextualität") applies to all texts and is a universal aspect of writing, since writers naturally draw from a limited pool of successful formulations (39, 45). This perspective of intertextuality reframes authorship as an ongoing process of compilation rather than a singular creation (38–39, 45). However, it also raises questions about textual identity – particularly regarding the status of drafts and whether different versions should be considered as different texts (45). The term 'nominal auto-intertextuality' ("nominelle Auto-Intertextualität"), on the other hand, refers to intertextuality occurring between distinct texts by the same author (46). Auto-intertextuality, like references to works by other authors, exhibits the same dialogic relation between texts that defines intertextuality (46, 48). Both perspectives enhance an analysis of *My Early Life*. Churchill's

self-citation across published texts and different genres indicates nominal auto-intertextuality, while his revision of the same material suggests a genetic dimension. Instead of conceptualising the memoir as an isolated act of self-narration, auto-intertextuality suggests that autobiographical formation is an ongoing process shaped by intertextual dialogue between an author's earlier and later works. Through repurposing his prior texts, Churchill's memoir takes part in a 'genetic' process of identity formation, where the self emerges dynamically through textual interplay with its own history. In this sense, auto-intertextuality positions *My Early Life* not as a derivative repetition of his journalism, but as a further stage in Churchill's self-construction.

In both cases of auto-intertextuality, the references often remain 'unmarked' – that is, their auto-intertextual status is not indicated in the text (Isekenmeier et al. 46). This applies to *My Early Life*, as Churchill only occasionally acknowledges his reuse of earlier material. Scholars distinguish between marked and unmarked intertextuality using various labels, such as explicit versus implicit, foregrounded versus concealed, overt versus tacit, or veiled intertextual references (Helbig 53–54). These terms are employed roughly synonymously to distinguish, in Jessica Mason's words, "references that are not explicitly marked out by title or definitive assertion of their presence by an author" and "always involve a degree of uncertainty about their presence or absence" (115–16) from "those that are objectively present and overt" (89).

Isekenmeier et al. suggest several reasons why authors may choose not to mark auto-intertextual references: they may regard different versions of a text as a natural progression, wish to conceal their own efforts in the sense of "*celare artem*" (concealing the art), or seek to avoid accusations of self-plagiarism (46). Conversely, marking ensures that uninitiated readers are more likely to recognise an intertextual reference and instigates a cognitive process in which readers apply their knowledge of the referenced text to the text they are reading and thereby adjust its interpretation (Helbig 161–62). Through marking intertextual references, authors establish a dialogue with their readers that can fulfil self-serving functions such as self-defence and self-presentation, driven by a fear of misunderstanding or criticism (181). This differentiation between marked and unmarked references and their functions within a text is therefore crucial for examining how and for what purpose Churchill integrates his war correspondence in *My Early Life*. It will become particularly relevant in Chapter 4,

where I analyse how Churchill's selective marking of sources affects the truth status of Churchill's memoir.

The issue of unacknowledged or unrecognisable intertextual references, however, remains controversial, with scholars like Genette and Riffaterre contesting their validity for an intertextual reading (Allen 108–9; Mason 115). The covert nature of Churchill's intertextual references indeed poses some methodological difficulties. By comparing Churchill's correspondence with his memoir, some of Churchill's unmarked intertextual references can be identified because they directly match the source texts. Other text passages share only subtle similarities with Churchill's earlier writings, which may be too tenuous to constitute genuine intertextual references. In other words, it is not always possible to distinguish an unmarked reference from a nonexistent reference, and, as Mason puts it, “(t)he existence of unmarked references at all creates a pervasive possibility that any element of any Base might be one” (119). Ulrich Broich, however, argues that a consistent pattern of intertextual references can create a context where even unmarked references are discernible to readers (“Formen der Markierung” 43). More importantly, I argue that even if particular borrowings remain difficult to verify, Churchill's sustained engagement with the genre conventions of war correspondence provides a stable interpretive framework. This position allows me to read *My Early Life* as actively engaging with his war correspondence rather than merely repeating it by accident.

In summary, intertextuality provides a framework for reading *My Early Life* as a work in dialogue with Churchill's earlier writings. Its meaning is not isolated but emerges through the citation and reshaping of his war correspondence. By incorporating both marked and unmarked self-references into the memoir, Churchill produces a hybrid narrative that fuses memoir with war journalism. This understanding of textual relation lays the groundwork for the following section on genre, which explores how such intertextual processes are organised and codified within literary systems.

3.2 Genre Dynamics and Hybridisation

Churchill's incorporation of his earlier war correspondence is not only a matter of textual reuse but a process of generic citation, a repurposing of the conventions of war reportage within an autobiographical framework. This merging of genres, as I argue in this thesis, is central to Churchill's self-fashioning. To theorise this hybridisation, I turn to recent developments in genre theory and intertextuality. By tracing how modern genre theory has moved from rigid taxonomies to a more dynamic, intertextual understanding of genre, I show how Churchill's memoir simultaneously belongs to, and unsettles, multiple genre traditions. The following section therefore addresses key questions underpinning my inquiry: what genres are, how they interact and merge, and how a text can incorporate other genres.

Although genre and intertextuality are now perceived as closely related, this has not always been the case. Initially, intertextuality was conceived as a better alternative to traditional genre theory and claimed to solve some of the latter's perceived limitations (Duff 54, 57, 67). During the 1960s, genre theory was criticised for being overly rigid and prescriptive, emphasising static rules and classifications rather than generic fluidity (55–57). Intertextuality, on the other hand, offered a more dynamic framework for understanding relations between texts. While Bakhtin's foundational work is sensitive to genre, he sought to create a new way of classifying texts that would go beyond traditional genre categories and include both literary and non-literary, oral and written forms (58). This attention to genre is discontinued in Kristeva's theory of intertextuality. As David Duff notes, Kristeva is not interested in the particularities of genre but subsumes it in her broad theory of intertextuality (60). Both Bakhtin and Kristeva, however, strongly distance themselves from traditional genre theory, regarding it as irreconcilable with the concept of intertextuality (67). Despite this initial opposition, genre theory and intertextuality have since proven to be complementary frameworks that, according to Duff, can enhance each other (55).

In the wake of poststructuralism, genre theory has moved from a rigid set of rules towards a more flexible understanding of genre. Initially, genre theory was characterised by attempts to impose strict categories on literature, inspired by the taxonomies in the natural sciences (Frow 56). Among the most prominent taxonomies are what John Frow terms the "Aristotelian model" and the "biological model" (78). According to the Aristotelian model, genre functions as a hierarchical classification system where each text belongs to only one

specific class (26–27, 58). The biological model, on the other hand, compares genres to biological species, suggesting that they evolve according to natural laws and have distinct boundaries, much like organisms classified under Linnaeus’s system or Darwin’s evolutionary theory (56–58). Such taxonomies, as Rick Altman notes, assume “that genres actually exist, that they have distinct borders, that they can be firmly identified, that they operate systematically, that their internal functioning can be observed and scientifically described, and that they evolve according to a fixed and identifiable trajectory” (qtd. in Frow 57–58). These assumptions have since been challenged and taxonomies are now regarded as inadequate to address the elasticity of genre.

One key contribution to this shift in understanding is Jacques Derrida’s impactful essay “The Law of Genre” (1980). Here, Derrida critiques the prescriptivist nature of the traditional, taxonomic genre concept, arguing that the term implies boundaries that are protected by rules: “As soon as the word ‘genre’ is sounded, as soon as it is heard, as soon as one attempts to conceive it, a limit is drawn. And when a limit is established, norms and interdictions are not far behind: ‘Do,’ ‘Do not’ says ‘genre,’ the word ‘genre,’ the figure, the voice, or the law of genre” (Derrida 4). However, the existence of this ‘law’ already implies the possibility of breaching it, the possibility of mixing genres (7). Genre is inherently unstable, since texts move between genres through intertextual processes such as repetition or citation, disrupting generic order and inviting “impurity, corruption, contamination” (6). Accordingly, Derrida hypothesises that “[e]very text participates in one or several genres, there is no genreless text; there is always a genre and genres, yet such participation never amounts to belonging” (14). In short, the essay highlights the paradox between the dogmatism and organising function of genres and their inherent tendency towards disorder and unpredictability (7, 32), arguing that texts engage with generic conventions without being constrained by them.

These insights paved the way for the contemporary understanding of genre, which has abandoned the notion of genre as a strict classificatory system or set of prescriptive rules. Instead, scholars now understand genres as malleable constructs that can merge, appear and disappear over time (Couser, “Genre Matters” 141). Genres are fundamentally intertextual; they evolve through ongoing dialogue and exchange with other genres, emerging from and transforming earlier forms in response to changing contexts and communicative needs (Frow

150). At the same time, the recognition of generic flexibility does not entail dispensing with genre categories altogether (Couser, “Genre Matters” 145). Genres exist as “particular *constellations* of thematic, rhetorical, and formal features” (Frow 71) that make them intelligible to writers and readers. These features, though historically contingent, provide a recognisable framework that can be invoked, varied, or subverted. Genre attribution thus depends on a text’s reference to established conventions or “codes,” which are “formed only by way of successive texts, in a cumulative process driven by intertextuality” (Juvan 71). Because each new text both cites and modifies those conventions, genres are simultaneously stable and mutable, and the intertextual borrowing and mixing of such attributes means that genre conventions themselves are subject to constant change and renegotiation (71). Due to their adaptive nature, genres are now studied in terms of their specific historical, political and cultural contexts (Couser, “Genre Matters” 141). Moreover, scholars now tend to view “genre as function rather than form (or form *as* function)” (141). Accordingly, Thomas Couser argues that generic labels “should be used not to *classify* but to *clarify* individual narratives – not to determine definitively what they are (they may be more than one thing at a time!) but to come to terms with what they are trying to *do*, to understand how they work and how they seek to affect the world” (*Memoir* 19). Genre theory, then, is far from obsolete; it remains indispensable precisely because it helps explain how meaning arises from the interplay between convention and innovation.

Just as genre theory has been reshaped by intertextuality theory, the latter has likewise evolved through engagement with genre theory. The narrow definition of intertextuality has been expanded to acknowledge that, in Frow’s words, “intertextual reference works at different levels of generality” and may refer to discursive elements outside of or larger than specific texts (52). Laurent Jenny has suggested that texts can reference entire genres rather than just individual works or specific realisations of a genre, since “[g]enre archetypes, however abstract, still constitute textual structures, ever present to the mind of the writer” (Jenny 42). Jenny argues that when a text engages with another genre, it incorporates that genre’s structural code, which becomes a meaningful component of the new text (Frow 53; Allen 109–10). Frow theorises the mechanisms of ‘citing’ another genre in similar terms. When a genre is embedded in a different genre, as in the example of a letter incorporated into a third-person narrative, “much of the logic of genre survives these translations from one

context to another” (49). The letter’s generic features remain the same, but the new context adapts its function to the new text (49). In short, “[s]hifting texts to another generic context . . . suspends the primary generic *force* of the text, but not its generic *structure*” (50). Intertextuality thus not only operates between texts but also between genres: texts can “cite” entire generic systems, recontextualising their forms and conventions to produce new meanings. This expanded view is crucial for understanding *My Early Life*, which similarly repurposes the conventions of war reportage for the new purpose of autobiographical self-fashioning.

A useful terminology for describing such intertextual practices can be found in German intertextuality scholarship, which distinguishes between references to individual texts (*Einzeltextreferenz*) and references to larger discursive systems (*Systemreferenz*). Ulrich Broich and Manfred Pfister initially define *Einzeltextreferenz* as intertextuality in the strictest sense, reserved for instances where one text references a specific, individual text, typically by a different author, but also including cases of auto-intertextuality (Broich, “Einzeltextreferenz” 48–50). *Systemreferenz* is defined by Pfister as the reference of a text to systems such as literary genres, archetypes, and myths (“Systemreferenz” 54–56). Later scholarship has proposed a further distinction between *Systemaktualisierung*, referring to a text’s genre membership, and *Systemreferenz*, the intertextual reference of a text to another genre through the incorporation of structural, content-related or stylistic elements of that genre (Isekenmeier et al. 5–6). Broich notes that although *Einzeltext-* and *Systemreferenz* are separate concepts in theory, they frequently overlap in actual texts and might be difficult to distinguish (“Einzeltextreferenz” 51). A literary work may simultaneously reference a particular text and draw on broader genre conventions, and readers may more easily identify genre features rather than intertextual references (51). For *My Early Life*, this framework clarifies how the text ‘actualises’ the memoir genre (*Systemaktualisierung*) whilst simultaneously referencing war correspondence through *Einzeltextreferenz* and *Systemreferenz*, drawing on its stylistic and structural codes to construct a hybrid mode of self-representation.

To conclude, this chapter has traced how the once separate frameworks of genre and intertextuality have converged to produce a dynamic model of textual interaction. Whilst intertextuality was initially positioned in opposition to genre theory, genres are now understood as inherently intertextual since they constantly interact and mingle, making it

impossible to maintain clear genre boundaries or strict taxonomies. At the same time, scholars of intertextuality have paid closer attention to genre and recognised that texts may reference both texts and genres. This understanding allows *My Early Life* to be read not simply as a memoir imbued with quotations from Churchill's journalism, but as a hybrid construct that cites the genre of war reportage itself. Churchill's reuse of his own dispatches thus operates at both textual and generic levels, importing the structure and style of war correspondence into his memoir. The next section takes a closer look at autobiographical subject formation, showing how intertextuality and genre affect concepts of originality, authority and identity.

3.3 Autobiographical Identity between Text and Genre

Since this thesis investigates the kind of persona Churchill fashions through his writing, this chapter explores how the autobiographical "I" emerges within textual and generic constraints. Intertextuality and genre theory in the context of life writing studies reveal Churchill's self not as a stable essence but as a narrative construct, shaped through his reworking of earlier texts and through the genre conventions of memoir and war correspondence. Since Churchill's self-representation is inseparable from his representation of history, I furthermore consider how genre mediates both selfhood and the past.

Poststructural intertextuality theory has profoundly challenged traditional notions of authorial originality and the status of the subject in life writing (Smith and Watson 204–6). Bakhtin's dialogism posited that "subjectivity itself is dialogical," since the language through which it is expressed inherently builds upon and interacts with various existing discourses (Smith and Watson 81). Hence, the autobiographical I is no "unitary 'I'" but an amalgamation of "multiple dialogic voices spoken as the autobiographical 'I'" (204). Kristeva further argued that the subject is lost in language and thus cannot be accessed through texts (Allen 39–40). When a person writes or speaks, their individual subjectivity is erased by the impersonal and pre-used condition of language; the "subject of utterance" becomes a "subject of enunciation" (39–40). This vision was most prominently put forward by Roland Barthes in his essay "The Death of the Author" (1967). He, too, regards writing as a "space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing" (Barthes 141). The text is an intertextual "tissue of quotations" and the author "never more than the instance writing" (143), a mere "scriptor" (144). As Couser explains, the impact

of poststructural thought on life writing studies “has been to turn a simplistic conception of life narrative on its head. In the naïve view, selves exist; they have being; then, at some point they may put themselves in writing . . . The view prevailing in the academy today is the opposite: . . . the emphasis in academic study of life writing has been on how the text in some sense produces a subject, rather than the opposite” (*Memoir* 182). This understanding of the autobiographical subject provides the conceptual tools to analyse how Churchill constructs his persona through intertextual and generic strategies.

More recently, authors and autobiographical subjects have been partially revived as real-life entities by life writing studies in order to account for ethical and political dimensions and embodied experience (Wagner-Egelhaaf 1, 4). Nevertheless, it remains crucial to recognise that the autobiographical “I” is not identical to the historical author (Smith and Watson 71). Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson therefore problematise the “autobiographical I” and distinguish between multiple “I”s (71–72). The “‘real’ or historical ‘I’” refers to the actual person who authored the text (72) – in the case of *My Early Life*, the physical Churchill who lived and wrote. While most Churchill scholars focus on examining this historical person through his writing, Smith and Watson warn that the real “I” remains “unknown and unknowable by readers and is not the ‘I’ that we gain access to in an autobiographical narrative” (72). The “narrating ‘I’” refers to the narrator, it is “a persona of the historical person who wants to tell, or is coerced into telling, a story about the self” (72), whereas the “narrated ‘I’” denotes the protagonist of the autobiographical narrative (73). Although conceptually distinct, narrating and narrated “I” are fluid categories and may be fragmented into further “I”s (74–75). Lastly, the category of the “ideological ‘I’” describes how subjects construct their identities and life narratives based on culturally and historically specific beliefs about personhood and the meaning of life (76–77). When reading life narratives, only the narrating, narrated, and ideological “I”s are accessible to readers (78). The historical “I” remains elusive, which is why I specifically examine Churchill’s autobiographical *persona*. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines “persona” as “[a]n assumed character or role, *esp.* one adopted by an author in his or her writing,” or “[t]he aspect of a person’s character that is displayed to or perceived by others” (“Persona”). In other words, I am interested in how Churchill deliberately crafted his public image through his writing.

If intertextuality theory exposes the constructedness of autobiographical subjectivity, genre theory explains how that construction takes shape through narrative conventions. As Couser reiterates, readers can only access the subject of an autobiographical narrative “by means of the mediation of the text, which is constructed according to various codes (such as the conventions of genre)” (*Memoir* 182). Life writing comprises a multitude of subgenres, each with its own historically specific conventions, which provide templates for self-reflection and narrative structure (Smith and Watson 91; Couser, *Memoir* 9). For memoir, common subtypes include conversion narratives, confessions, apologies, and coming-of-age narratives (Couser, *Memoir* 9). The choice of genre impacts the plotting and the kind of subject that inhabits the narrative. Smith and Watson note that there is a “relationship between narrative plotting and models of identity”; “For example, a narrative of the self-made man requires a plotting that takes the narrative subject first through an apprenticeship and then through successive stages of public accomplishment and validation” (246). Autobiographical identity is thus shaped by the conventions of genre, and, as Couser observes, an author’s selection of a particular genre is itself telling, since it discloses the stance they take toward their earlier self (*Memoir* 9).

Yet genre conventions and expectations are not fixed; they can be subverted, mixed, and evolve over time (Smith and Watson 91). This fluidity makes close analysis of genre all the more essential. Couser argues that the importance of genre in contemporary life writing studies is highlighted by the “proliferation of new terms for sub-genres” (“Genre Matters” 142), which help scholars to examine emerging and “niche” autobiographical genres (143). Nuanced differentiation of genre conventions is also important when analysing mixed forms: “although individual life narratives are increasingly seen as blending elements from various genres, comprehension of their hybridity depends on naming and identifying the various sub-genres in play. . . . In fact, the notion of generic hybridity can help to illuminate classic as well as contemporary works” (144–45). In Churchill’s case, *My Early Life* fuses the memoir genre with a genre that is not typically classed as life writing, although Victorian war correspondence does feature a first-person perspective. The specific genre conventions of war reporting, imported into the memoir genre, significantly impact how Churchill understands his past, how he constructs truth and legitimises his narrative, and how he ultimately portrays

himself. As I argue in this thesis, this generic hybridity is not incidental but constitutive of Churchill's memoir.

Memoir is never merely the story of a self, but also an interpretation of the past. As subsequent chapters will show, Churchill's life story, his version of history and his public persona are deeply enmeshed and difficult to pry apart. When analysing the impact of Churchill's war correspondence on his memoir, I therefore also consider his portrayal of the past, insofar as it intersects with his self-portrayal. The historical Churchill is frequently quoted for stating that history would treat him kindly because he would write that history himself (see, for instance, Fielding et al. 76), insinuating that history is a malleable narrative that can be shaped to one's own advantage. From this perspective, Churchill's vision of history is itself a form of self-portraiture. Genre again mediates this process. Hayden White has famously challenged the very distinction between history and literature, arguing that historiography is literary in the sense that it crafts narratives out of historical records, narratives that follow generic patterns and use literary devices (Korhonen 11–12). White argues that while historical archives contain factual information about the past, the process of turning the past into a story renders history fictional (Korhonen 12). The past does not inherently follow generic templates like comedy or tragedy, which are imposed upon it retrospectively (13). Churchill's portrayal of British imperialism as a romantic adventure narrative – a template provided by the war correspondence genre – lays the groundwork for his self-portrayal as a hero whose destiny is intertwined with the empire. In this sense, the boundaries between self-writing and historiography collapse; the same generic forms that define the autobiographical "I" also structure Churchill's image of the past.

In sum, intertextuality and genre theory reconfigure life writing as a site where the self is constructed through language and narrative conventions, rather than as a straightforward self-revelation. For Churchill, this means that the persona he constructs in *My Early Life* is assembled from his own earlier textual self and shaped by the conventions of the war correspondence and memoir genres. The following chapters examine both dimensions of this construction: the auto-intertextual reuse of Churchill's journalistic writing and the generic frameworks through which that material is reconfigured. My analytical chapters are organised to address the major constituents of genres, their "thematic, rhetorical, and formal features" (Frow 71). I move from analysing the memoir's temporal and narrative structure to the

rhetorical and editorial strategies that produce authenticity and truthfulness, and finally to the representation of war and the war correspondent. Through this progression, I aim to provide a comprehensive account of how Churchill's repurposing of his war journalism in *My Early Life* functions as both an act of self-fashioning and rewriting of imperial history, both of which continue to inform the enduring Churchill 'myth'.

4. Hybrid Temporality and the Revival of the Past

The news, by definition, has a very short lifespan. According to a popular saying, yesterday's newspaper only serves as "wrapping for today's fish and chips" (Williams, *Read All About It!* 11–12), and Churchill himself is remembered for stating that "[n]othing . . . was as dead as yesterday's newspaper" (Ashley 16). Newness is inextricably linked to the present moment. Memoirs, conversely, reflect on the past with hindsight and aim to preserve its significance for posterity. Whereas journalism is characterised by speed, immediacy, and ephemerality, memoirs are generally retrospective, contemplative, and geared towards permanence. In many respects, the time of memoir is antithetical to the fast-paced topicality of the news. When Churchill incorporates his war journalism into his memoir, he thus combines two rather different temporalities. This chapter examines the tensions between these temporal dimensions, asking how hybrid temporality affects *My Early Life* and the persona it constructs.

To examine the temporal hybridity of *My Early Life*, it is first necessary to contextualise the specific temporality of Victorian war correspondence. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the British press was fundamentally transformed by technological innovation and by increased readership (Waters, *Special Correspondence* 2). Steam printing, railway expansion, the telegraph, and the emergence of news agencies enabled significant growth of the press and accelerated the publication of new information (2, 23). These advances gave rise to the figure of the "special correspondent", a novel kind of travelling reporter who covered current affairs, such as wars, in serial instalments (5, 8). To surpass the rival technologies of photography and telegraphy, special correspondents were pressured to quickly dispatch their letters and adopt an exceptionally vivid and immersive style (Waters, *Special Correspondence* 21–24; Williams, *New History* 17). Special correspondence can therefore be understood as "a technology whose development both cultivated and responded to the need for speed in the transmission of news" (Waters, "Graphic" 178) and contributed to "the time-space compression we have been used to associating with the railroad and telegraph" (170). This temporality of speed and immediacy shapes Churchill's war reporting and resurfaces in *My Early Life*.

The temporality that animates Churchill's dispatches thus collides with the retrospective logic of the memoir genre, where events are summarised and reconfigured into a

coherent narrative. The friction between these two temporal regimes – one immediate, serial, and open-ended, the other retrospective and meaning-making – is central to *My Early Life*. As Jens Brockmeier argues, autobiographical time must be differentiated from historical time, which is a linear and “continuous sequence of events” (62). Autobiographical time, by contrast, is not as straightforward; it is narratively constituted and “emerges in a continuous synthesis of various *times* and time orders” (51, 56). The autobiographical act combines memories of the past, awareness of the present, and anticipation of the future (54); it is “a process of understanding one’s self in time” (55). In consequence, “identity is a diachronic construction” (53). Analysing the complex temporal makeup of *My Early Life* is therefore key to understanding Churchill’s autobiographical self. The following section explores time in *My Early Life* at a macrostructural level, analysing how the memoir’s chapter design, pacing, and emplotment reflect the temporal logic of war correspondence. Section 4.2 then expands on these insights by analysing temporal proximity and tense, showing how Churchill’s nostalgic reanimation of his war correspondent years shapes his self-representation as witness and representative of a bygone era.

4.1 “The True Path of Chronology”: Time and Narrative Structure

As Brockmeier contends, time in autobiographical narratives functions “both as a structure and object of construction” (51): it serves as the organising framework and as a phenomenon actively reconstituted in the act of narration. This section investigates the temporal structure of Churchill’s *My Early Life*, showing how journalistic temporalities inform and complicate the memoir’s formal architecture. Through an analysis of its chronology, pacing, and narrative plotting, I argue that Churchill constructs a narrating “I” that merges correspondent and memoirist, producing structural tensions that resist the coherence and closure expected of life writing.

My Early Life largely adheres to a linear chronology. The memoir’s timeline begins with Churchill’s birth in 1874 and ends in 1902, when Churchill embarks on his political career. The years between 1874 and 1902 are ordered in strict temporal succession, with only minor flashbacks and few foreshadowings of the period between 1902 and 1930, when the memoir was published. As Sell observes, Churchill’s prolepses are mainly restricted to references to the Great War and the fates of his friends and colleagues (244). Apart from these

digressions, Churchill takes great care to establish a chronological sequence, which he deems a superior narrative order. In a meta-commentary on his philosophy on writing, Churchill's narrating "I" remarks: "Finally the work must be surveyed as a whole and due proportion and strict order established from beginning to end. I already knew that chronology is the key to easy narrative" (*MEL* 224). Yet soon after, the narrating "I" deviates from the linear progression of the narrative and reflects: "But I anticipate" (225). Following a longer aside concerning his relationship with the South African politician Louis Botha, Churchill writes: "This considerable digression will, I hope, be pardoned by the reader, and I make haste to return to the true path of chronology" (270). These comments show that Churchill's narrating "I" considers chronology the most natural and 'true' framework for retrospectively structuring his life. At the same time, they reveal that strict linearity is not easy to enforce or to maintain in autobiographical writing. Rather than emerging organically through the process of writing and remembering, a chronological structure must be established later – and even then, digressions are impossible to eliminate altogether. This difficulty in sustaining linear progression thus reflects a tension between the retrospective, digressive nature of memoir and the forward-moving temporal logic of historical time.

Despite its challenges and limitations, chronology is a widespread narrative order in the memoir genre. As Couser notes, "[c]hronology is the dominant ordering principle in memoir, probably because it seems intuitively apt, even inevitable: after all, we live our lives in chronological order. But we do not, and need not, remember them that way; in fact, we usually do not" (*Memoir* 64). Chronology appears natural because it mirrors the progression of historical time, but it is only one ordering principle among many (Smith and Watson 92–93). Brockmeier identifies "six different narrative models of autobiographical time: the linear, circular, cyclical, spiral, static, and fragmentary model" (51). The linear model is characterised by a successive chronology, which, according to Brockmeier, is not particularly well-suited to autobiographical writing (62). Chronology alone is insufficient to impose meaning onto a life, and it is difficult to adhere to in practice (62–63). What is more, chronology is not necessarily 'true' or authentic, as Churchill implies, since "even the supposedly given chronology of a life is always already a story, a highly selective reconfiguration. If it were not selective, the account of a life would last at least as long as the life itself" (63). If linearity in a life narrative is optional rather than necessary, Churchill's

insistence on it suggests that his temporal organisation may be shaped by the auto-intertextual influence of his earlier war journalism.

The war correspondence genre, by comparison, is inherently bound to chronology and historical time. Historical time, as opposed to autobiographical time, conceives time “as a linear and irreversible ‘flow of nows’” (Brockmeier 62). War journalists report on events that are in motion; their task is to capture the present moment and to deliver their observations with as little delay as possible (Williams, *New History* 17). A linear temporal succession of correspondence is naturally established as a consequence of serially reporting on the present, in particular in daily newspapers such as the *Daily Graphic*, *Daily Telegraph*, and the *Morning Post*. Timeliness and topicality are particularly significant in the context of daily papers. As Martin Conboy writes, “[t]he periodical newspaper was the single most important element in the creation of modern cultural conceptions of information in time. It required a particular form of writing which was to distinguish itself from other related literary forms, one which was centred on the transitory and the contemporary and foregrounded the political and public aspects of writing like no other” (19). Yet, it must be noted that the publication of Churchill’s war letters was not always up-to-date. While Churchill did transmit urgent information via telegrams, his letters offered more detailed and descriptive accounts that sometimes appeared in print weeks later (Toye, “Golden Age” 158). According to Toye, journalism in this period was “two-speed” – or even “multi-speed”, depending on the medium and urgency of transmission (158). Furthermore, Churchill’s war letters were sometimes published out of order, as in the case of Churchill’s reports from Sudan. Nonetheless, war journalism arguably operates under different conditions than memoir writing: it reports on ongoing events, is written on location, and is published in a regular and serialised format.

The influence of this kind of periodical storytelling characteristic of war correspondence is visible in *My Early Life*’s chapter structure. In the previously cited meta-commentary on writing, Churchill’s narrating “I” reflects that “[e]ach chapter must be self-contained. All the chapters should be of equal value and more or less of equal length. Some chapters define themselves naturally and obviously; but much more difficulty arises when a number of heterogeneous incidents none of which can be omitted have to be woven together into what looks like an integral theme” (*MEL* 224). The memoir’s chapters are indeed self-contained, relatively short, and of roughly the same length, much like his newspaper articles:

1. Childhood (pp. 9–22)
2. Harrow (pp. 23–32)
3. Examinations (pp. 33–50)
4. Sandhurst (pp. 51–69)
5. The Fourth Hussars (pp. 70–82)
6. Cuba (pp. 83–97)
7. Hounslow (pp. 98–109)
8. India (pp. 110–17)
9. Education at Bangalore (pp. 118–31)
10. The Malakand Field Force (pp. 132–44)
11. The Mamund Valley (pp. 145–58)
12. The Tirah Expedition (pp. 159–72)
13. A Difficulty With Kitchener (pp. 173–82)
14. The Eve of Omdurman (pp. 183–93)
15. The Sensations of a Cavalry Charge (pp. 194–208)
16. I Leave the Army (pp. 209–29)
17. Oldham (pp. 230–41)
18. With Buller to the Cape (pp. 242–51)
19. The Armoured Train (pp. 252–72)
20. In Durance Vile (pp. 273–81)
21. I Escape From the Boers – I (pp. 282–99)
22. I Escape From the Boers – II (pp. 300–12)
23. Back to the Army (pp. 313–21)
24. Spion Kop (pp. 322–32)
25. The Relief of Ladysmith (pp. 333–41)
26. In the Orange Free State (pp. 342–58)
27. Johannesburg and Pretoria (pp. 359–68)
28. The Khaki Election (pp. 369–78)
29. The House of Commons (pp. 379–87)

Not only chapter length and themes mirror Churchill's correspondence, many of the titles are directly drawn from Churchill's newspaper headlines (e.g. "The Battle of Omdurman", "Reflections on the Cavalry Charge", "Fate of the Armoured Train", "How I Escaped from Pretoria", "Five Days' Action at Spion Kop", "The Relief of Ladysmith").³ The chapters are brief and mostly impersonal, focusing on the historical events and places previously featured in his correspondence. The memoir thus actively cites both his earlier texts and the conventions of the war correspondence genre, producing a hybrid narrative that situates the autobiographical "I" within historical time. The serial rhythm of the large number of short chapters furthermore replicates the logic of newspaper publication, presenting each episode as

³ Even the memoir's subtitle, *A Roving Commission*, echoes the headline of a previous war report in which Churchill chronicles his travels in search of active fighting after the liberation of Ladysmith ("A Roving Commission" [14 May 1900] 5–6). Sullivan believes that the memoir's subtitle is drawn from a historical novel by George Alfred Henty, *A Roving Commission, or, Through the Black Insurrection at Hayti* (1899) (2). Henty, himself a former war correspondent, specialised in writing imperialist "adventure books for boys": "His stories . . . consisted of fictitious episodes set against a factual background and included all the necessary ingredients that so besotted the late Victorians: perilous situations, narrow escapes, and heroic deeds" (Wilkinson-Latham 91). Whilst it is possible to draw a connection between Henty's and Churchill's writing, it is equally plausible that Churchill later borrowed the title from his own archive of war journalism. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines a "roving commission" as the "authorization given to a person or body to travel as they consider necessary" ("Roving Commission"). The related expression "roving reporter" is frequently used to denote a travelling correspondent (cf. Waters, *Special Correspondence* 3, 5, 6, 7, 14). Read in this light, the subtitle reflects *My Early Life*'s indebtedness to Churchill's earlier texts, the thematic centrality of his role as a correspondent, as well as the memoir's peripatetic structure.

self-contained yet part of a continuous stream. Through this generic borrowing, Churchill positions himself less as a reflective memoirist looking back on his life and more as a correspondent chronicling events as they unfold.

The memoir's chapters are, however, not spread evenly across the span of Churchill's early life. Churchill roughly dedicates one chapter to his early childhood, three to his schooling (chapters 2–4), twenty to his military service (5–6, 8–15, 18–27), three to his political career (17, 28–29), and two chapters to intervening periods (7 and 16). His time as a soldier and correspondent thus takes up most of the book, which results in a distortion of the memoir's pace. Narratologists distinguish between discourse time and story time; “[d]iscourse time is measured in words or pages of text or in the hours of reading time, whereas story time represents the temporal duration and chronology of the underlying plot” (Fludernik 608). In *My Early Life*, the story time from 1874 to 1895 – the first twenty-one years of Churchill's life – is compressed into five chapters, resulting in a relative pace of 4.2 years per chapter. This pace then slows considerably, as the five-year period from 1895 to 1900, Churchill's war correspondent years, is recounted in twenty-two chapters (amounting to 0.23 years per chapter). Finally, the memoir accelerates again to cover the years 1900 to 1902 in two chapters (one year per chapter). These calculations suggest that when Churchill chronicles his time as a correspondent and incorporates material from his earlier writings through auto-intertextual citation, the narrative moves from spans of years to intervals of months, weeks, or even single days. Discourse time increases as story time decreases. In this respect, the memoir partially adopts a temporal structure that approximates the pace and format of war correspondence. Rather than summarising his past experiences, Churchill's narrating “I” slows the narrative to report on his war correspondent years in more granular detail.

Yet, as previously argued, linear, episodic narration alone does not suffice to establish any deeper meaning, narrative coherence, or closure that is required of autobiographical writing. The news does not adhere to an overarching narrative structure; it is an incessant flow of information without a definite end. This is why journalism is ephemeral: “newspapers do not have an eye to posterity, because they are created for and consumed by a contemporary audience, with a lifespan no longer than the publication (or consumption) of the next issue. In this way, they have to address and be of relevance to their audience immediately, as they cannot be ‘discovered’ long after their publication, as can great works of literature”

(Wilkinson 10). Life writing, by contrast, typically seeks to construct an enduring narrative that can resonate with readers beyond the immediate context and even the lifespan of its subject. Hence, memoirists rely on genre conventions to craft narratives that render their lives intelligible and meaningful (Smith and Watson 91).

My Early Life's refusal to conform to any established narrative patterns further reflects its disjointed temporal structure, inherited from journalism's episodic chronology. Although *My Early Life* shares features with multiple autobiographical subgenres, it ultimately defies strict classification. Its thematic focus might suggest a war memoir, military memoir, or political memoir, yet the work's temporal span and sequencing challenge these conventional frameworks. Modern war memoirists typically perceive war as a profoundly disruptive event, distinct from the timeline of their civilian lives (Dwyer 3). Accordingly, "the war narrative usually starts with either recruitment or training, and finishes with the end of the recruit's war" (3). Military memoirs, by contrast, often document an extended military career (Vernon 18). Churchill's memoir, however, begins with his childhood and culminates in his early political career. It does not align with the typical time frame of a political memoir either. Political memoirs are typically focused on the politician's time in power; serving to "recount the important political engagements of his or her career, to explain and interpret the choices made and forces encountered, to portray the relationships experienced in the course of political activity and perhaps to offer some precepts or wisdom to assist political successors" (Egerton xiii). Yet, Churchill's early political endeavours occupy only a very small part of the memoir. Consequently, the memoir's temporal and narrative makeup does not fully conform to the conventions of these subgenres.

My Early Life is most frequently described as a bildungsroman (Alldritt 96; Reynolds 119). The term originally refers to a novelistic genre, a coming-of-age story that "unfolds as a narrative of education through encounters with mentors, apprenticeship, renunciation of youthful folly, and eventual integration into society" (Smith and Watson 91). A chronological, progressive temporal structure is suited to portraying such linear personal development. As Couser writes, "[b]ildungsroman tells how an identity was formed through steady growth, or growth in stages, rather than a sudden abrupt reversal or illumination" (*Memoir* 41). Churchill's narrating "I" already establishes this pattern in the memoir's preface, where he states: "I have tried, in each part of the quarter-century in which this tale lies, to show the

point of view appropriate to my years, whether as a child, a schoolboy, a cadet, a subaltern, a war-correspondent, or a youthful politician” (5). This list imposes a strict linearity onto his life, implying a close succession of distinct stages and identities. In practice, however, these stages and selves overlap and cannot be neatly separated: Churchill’s narrated “I” is simultaneously child and schoolboy, as well as soldier, war correspondent, and aspiring politician. Moreover, the development is uneven; the memoir concentrates heavily on Churchill’s war correspondent years, compressing earlier formative periods and slowing narrative time around the later episodes. From an auto-intertextual perspective, this uneven emphasis reflects the incorporation of pre-existing correspondence: material from his dispatches is reworked to construct the narrating “I,” privileging certain events over others and shaping the memoir’s apparent developmental trajectory. In other words, the memoir unsettles the promise of “steady growth” by importing the pace and event-driven temporality of his war correspondence.

Finally, the memoir’s resistance to closure can be read as a further narrative consequence of journalistic temporality. Quite obviously, memoirists cannot narrate the ends of their own lives, and therefore have to find other ways to conclude their stories (Smith and Watson 240). Couser notes that in autobiographical subgenres, “the kind of closure is predetermined by the generic formula”, and “[w]ith the bildungsroman – in memoir as well as in fiction – the conventional resolution is the arrival of the individual at some sort of equilibrium, initiation into society as a young adult” (*Memoir* 68). At first glance, *My Early Life* appears to close with a successful social integration: Churchill returns to London and is elected to parliament. In this sense, the memoir is “a story of Churchill finding himself and his vocations” (Weidhorn 100). The last chapter, however, foreshadows growing tensions with the Conservative party (*MEL* 383) and “ends with premonitions of the coming party change” (Weidhorn 104). The memoir’s final sentence reads as follows: “Events were soon to arise in the fiscal sphere which were to plunge me into new struggles and absorb my thoughts and energies at least until September 1908, when I married and lived happily ever afterwards” (387). This ending is awkward for several reasons, not least because it merges a foreshadowing of financial problems with a fairy-tale marriage. Whilst marriage can be regarded as a path to social integration, Churchill’s wife is not mentioned elsewhere in the memoir. Hence, the ending appears abrupt and incongruous and fails to achieve narrative

closure. This lack of resolution further illustrates the text's difficulty in conforming to established memoir genres, a difficulty that may stem from its significant reliance on the serial temporality of war correspondence. Just as the news cycle never truly ends, Churchill's self-narrative resists finality.

In summary, the influence of Churchill's war correspondence on his account of the years 1874 to 1895, which constitute the majority of the memoir, results in the adoption of the genre's temporal structures, such as the adherence to linear historical time, the serial character of largely autonomous chapters of equal discourse time, and the focus on small increments of story time. This creates tensions within the memoir genre, in particular regarding the autobiographical need for temporal digressions and the lack of narrative coherence and closure characteristic of journalistic writing. As the temporal makeup of the memoir indicates, Churchill's narrating "I" is a hybrid of memoirist and reporter, simultaneously assembling the past from a distance and serially witnessing it in real time. In the following chapter, I expand on this argument by considering Churchill's proximity to events at a linguistic level, showing how this dual temporal position creates a sense of nostalgia that functions as an alternative form of closure and meaning-making in *My Early Life*.

4.2 "A Picture of a Vanished Age": Nostalgic Past and Present

Memoirists and war correspondents have different levels of proximity to the events they are describing. Memoirists are positioned to reflect on their lives with hindsight and create a "retrospective teleology" that reconfigures the past in line with the present (Brockmeier 60). Any autobiographical narrative is therefore a "interest-driven reconstruction of the past from the perspective of the writing present that represents past events in a way in which they could not have been presented at the moment they were experienced" (Depkat 77). By contrast, war correspondents typically write with minimal temporal distance; the narration and reception of their reports occur in close proximity to the unfolding events, which affords little room for hindsight or recontextualisation. These differences in perspective produce very distinct linguistic temporalities, which are examined in detail in this chapter. Churchill's incorporation of war correspondence material and conventions into the reflective form of memoir collapses these temporalities, resulting in a complex mix of proximity and distance. As this chapter argues, Churchill's oscillation between a remote and vividly immediate past in *My Early Life*

generates nostalgia through which he constructs himself as both eyewitness and relic of the past, a persona rooted in the Victorian period of the British Empire yet haunted by its decline.

The end of *My Early Life*'s writing time can be dated to 1930, the year of the memoir's publication (Manchester 862–63). Its preface is signed “Chartwell Manor, *August*, 1930” (*MEL* 6). Accordingly, there is a twenty-eight-year distance between the chronological conclusion of the memoir and the final phase of its conception. The gap between narrating and narrated “I” is not closed as the memoir progresses. Churchill's present, the year 1930, is not explicitly addressed in the memoir. Only the preface vaguely gestures towards the present as “anxious and dubious times” (*MEL* 6). From a biographical perspective, it was indeed a difficult time for the historical Churchill. The memoir was concluded during the start of his “wilderness years”, a period marked by political isolation (Sell 245, 247). Following the 1929 election, Churchill had lost his role as Chancellor of the Exchequer to a new Labour government and contention with Conservative Party leaders dimmed his future political prospects (Sullivan 2–3). As Weidhorn summarises, Churchill “was, after great deeds in the earlier part of the century, on the shelf and without a following or, in a sense, a party” (97). His political career appeared to be a “record of brilliant failures,” and Churchill “the classical case of a man with a splendid future behind him” (Snow, qtd. in Weidhorn 97–98). On top of that, Churchill had lost substantial amounts of money in the Wall Street Crash in 1929, which caused him to rely more heavily on his writing for financial stability (Manchester 826–28). However, none of these pressing personal issues are related to his readers. Instead, *My Early Life* focuses on the past.

Although Churchill did not write his memoir towards the end of his life, he frequently emphasises the distance between his present time and the past. Churchill's early years are presented as belonging to a remote past that cannot be remembered by “the new generation” the memoir is addressed to (*MEL* 6). This sense of great temporal distance is already established in his preface:

When I survey this work as a whole I find I have drawn a picture of a vanished age. The character of society, the foundations of politics, the methods of war, the outlook of youth, the scale of values, are all changed, and changed to an extent I should not have believed possible in so short a space without any violent domestic revolution. I cannot pretend to feel that they are in all respects changed for the better. I was a child of the Victorian era, when the structure of our country seemed firmly set, when its position in trade and on the seas was unrivalled, and when the realization of the greatness of our Empire and of our duty to preserve it was ever growing stronger. In

those days the dominant forces in Great Britain were very sure of themselves and of their doctrines. (*MEL* 5)

For Churchill's narrating "I," the past is both irretrievably lost and superior to the present. Nostalgia is frequently described as a "bittersweet" emotion that combines a painful yearning for a vanished past with a subtle pleasure that is tinged with regret (Dickinson and Erben 223). Since nostalgia "is primarily a feeling and not a cognitive process," it is "allusive" rather than "analytic" (225). The past is not necessarily remembered accurately, but may appear slippery and hazy. In *My Early Life*, this sense of a remote and indistinct past is reinforced by the constant repetition of the phrase "in those days" throughout the memoir. The phrase is ostensibly used to explain the past to modern readers, but primarily serves to contrast a romanticised past with an inferior present, whether in respect to changing political or economic conditions (*MEL* 210, 373, 379), or the nature of warfare (192). Even the status of war correspondents has since deteriorated: "War-correspondents were considerable people in those days of small wars, and I was at that time one of the best-known writers among them and serving one of the most influential newspapers" (237). The phrase "in those days" thus functions as an unspecific temporal marker that signals change and distance between the time of writing and a vague past time. Alldritt observes that "[t]he contrasting of then and now is one of the most insistent themes in the memoir," which paints Churchill as a "historical and generational outsider" (98). Through these contrasts, Churchill positions himself as the last witness of a lost age, a nostalgic custodian of imperial values.

The impression of historical discontinuity is underscored by the memoir's omission of the years 1902 to 1930. As Sell notes, this substantial gap in time makes the sharp contrast between 1930 and 1874–1902 believable (244–45). The intervening years include the whole span of the First World War, which looms over Churchill's memoir and shapes his perspective on his early life. Despite the memoir's mostly jovial tone, Weidhorn finds that "trauma and disillusionment constantly hedge the narrative" (101). Churchill occasionally foreshadows the war by contrasting it with his previous experiences of warfare, which results in a troubling diminishment of imperial violence. After his account of the battle of Omdurman, for instance, Churchill reflects: "This kind of war was full of fascinating thrills. It was not like the Great War. . . . Most of us were fated to see a war where the hazards were reversed, where death was the general expectation and severe wounds were counted as lucky escapes . . . Everything

depends upon the scale of events” (*MEL* 192–93). Churchill’s portrayal of imperial war as an adventure exemplifies the broader tendency in British imperial discourse to naturalise and trivialise colonial conquest. Even as the First World War provides him with a perspective of greater scale, it does not inspire moral reckoning but transforms his youth into a distant, nostalgic past.

Yet, paradoxically, when Churchill narrates his war correspondent years, the past appears curiously alive. Consider the following scene:

The regiment was coming on behind us, and dawn was breaking. It was already half light as we climbed the slope. What should we find at the summit? For cool, tense excitement I commend such moments. Now we are near the top of the ridge. I make one man follow a hundred yards behind, so that whatever happens, he may tell the tale. There is no sound but our own clatter. We have reached the crest line. We rein in our horses. Every minute the horizon extends; we can already see 200 yards. Now we can see perhaps a quarter of a mile. All is quiet; no life but our own breathes among the rocks and sand hummocks of the ridge. No ambushade, no occupation in force! The farther plain is bare below us: we can now see more than half a mile. So they have all decamped! Just what we said! All bolted off to Kordofan; no battle! But wait! The dawn is growing fast. Veil after veil is lifted from the landscape. What is this shimmering in the distant plain? Nay – it is lighter now – what are these dark markings beneath the shimmer? *They are there!* These enormous black smears are thousands of men; the shimmering is the glinting of their weapons. It is now daylight. . . . A glorious sunrise is taking place behind us; but we are admiring something else. It is already light enough to use field-glasses. The dark masses are changing their values. They are already becoming lighter than the plain; they are fawn-coloured. Now they are a kind of white, while the plain is dun. In front of us is a vast array four or five miles long. It fills the horizon till it is blocked out on our right by the serrated silhouette of Surgham Peak. This is an hour to live. We mount again, and suddenly new impressions strike the eye and mind. These masses are not stationary. They are advancing, and they are advancing fast. A tide is coming in. But what is this sound which we hear: a deadened roar coming up to us in waves? They are cheering for God, his Prophet and his holy Khalifa. (*MEL* 194–95)

Towards the beginning of the paragraph, Churchill’s narrator suddenly switches from past to present tense, creating the impression that the events are unfolding in the here and now (Alkon 100). The narrative unfolds slowly as Churchill’s interior monologue imparts his successive impressions and thoughts to the reader. He thus invites readers to share his experiences in almost real time. The ambiguous use of the pronouns “we” and “us” could refer to fellow soldiers or to readers who are drawn into the narrative through this mode of address. Churchill’s descriptions are rich in sensory detail, including both auditory and visual elements. His portrayal of the landscape combines broad, sweeping perspectives, such as

references to the horizon and distances in miles, with finer details such as glimmers of light, which creates a vivid and lifelike setting. The result is an incredibly immersive scene, characteristic of a war correspondent's "ability to represent events, wherever they happened, in sufficiently graphic prose so as to transport readers imaginatively to the scene described" (Waters, *Special Correspondence* 10).

The stylistic resemblance to the war correspondence genre is not incidental, since the scene is an embellished version of one of Churchill's war letters from Sudan. Churchill's reconstruction of the sunrise scene closely echoes his original dispatch, reusing distinctive imagery such as the "waves" of sound, and painterly details such as the "dark blurs and streaks, relieved and diversified with odd-looking gleams of light from the spear points" ("The Battle of Omdurman" 5). This writing style, typical of Victorian war correspondence, was referred to as "word-painting" at the time, because of its detailed, image-rich descriptions that mimicked the techniques of visual art, aiming to capture the viewpoint of someone who witnessed the events firsthand (Waters, *Special Correspondence* 18). Eyewitnessing, as John Peters notes, is after all a "sensory experience" as well as the "discursive act of stating one's experience for the benefit of an audience that was not present at the event," in which case "[w]itnesses serve as the surrogate sense organs of the absent" (25). To compete with emerging visual and communication technologies, correspondents thus wrote exceptionally vivid and dramatic accounts of events (Waters, *Special Correspondence* 20–21). Thereby, "special correspondence attempted to reduce the imaginative distance between the positions of the correspondent and reader, and the time and place of the events described, so as to generate an effect of spatio-temporal immersion, of vividly evoking the presence of temporally and spatially distant scenes" (24). In *My Early Life*, Churchill draws on his previous text and his experience as a writer of war correspondence to word-paint a scene that is even more descriptive and immersive than the previous version. The techniques of war reporting resurface here to animate the past as if it were still unfolding before the eyes of the reader.

The characteristic style of war reporting clashes with the genre conventions of autobiographical writing. The conflict between both styles is encapsulated in the difference between scene and summary. In the context of narrative fiction, scene refers to the detailed rendition of specific moments through vivid description and dialogue, creating a dramatic

quality and a sense of directness and immediacy (Couser, *Memoir* 68–70). Summary, on the other hand, observes the past from a distance and aims to condense recurring events into a more reflective, general narration (69). It focuses on the narrator’s current perspective, how they interpret the event now rather than how they first experienced it (69). Ultimately, Couser argues that scene and summary “are not just different forms of textuality; they involve distinct types of actions on the part of the author. Scene puts a premium on certain writing skills – the ability to describe and to imitate speech; summary requires higher-order thinking, powers of reflection, insight, and distillation” (69). Couser observes a trend towards increasingly scene-based life writing, which he terms “high-definition autobiography” (72). While such autobiographical narratives are “highly evocative”, they lack plausibility as memory does not naturally retain a large amount of specific details (73–74). Besides, scene does not lend itself to introspection, and Couser finds that “[t]he more a memoirist writes in highly detailed scenes (especially in the present tense), the less distance there is between narrator and protagonist, the less room for illuminating perspective, the less possibility for self-discovery and the achievement of self-knowledge. To me, such writing abdicates an important obligation of the memoirist” (175). The prevalence of scene in Churchill’s account of his years as a correspondent and soldier may thus betray an unwillingness to critically reflect on his past. By repurposing his initial observations and immersing his readers in the external story, he withholds deeper insights into both his inner feelings at the time and his retrospective reassessment of events. Instead, Churchill’s narrating “I” expressed nostalgic sentiments for a dramatised version of the past.

The paradoxical combination of a simultaneously distant and current past in *My Early Life* reflects the temporal dimensions of nostalgia. Churchill’s nostalgia has been identified as a major theme in his memoir. Weidhorn reads the memoir as an elegy for “a vanished Victorian Eden” inspired by a “‘lost generation’ outlook” in the wake of World War I (101). Cannadine places it within the larger trajectory of aristocratic decline (150), describing it as “a classic piece of patrician reminiscence” (151). Sullivan disagrees, finding that “dissonant notes intrude” (12) and subvert Churchill’s nostalgia (8). The memoir’s temporal regime, however, supports a reading of the memoir as structured by a pervasive sense of nostalgia for the past. Since the nostalgic past is perceived as gone and impossible to re-experience, it is predicated on a linear understanding of time (Dickinson and Erben 227). Linear time flows in

one direction; each moment is unique and irreversible. Thus, Churchill's historical chronology is well-suited to the logic of nostalgia. At the same time, however, Churchill revives past events through lively descriptive scenes that transport history into the present moment. As Emily Hughes explains, "the time of nostalgia is fundamentally ambiguous," merging "an experience of the *past as present* . . . and the *past as past*" (157). Hence, the nostalgic past is "both present and past, retrievable and irretrievable, and proximal and distant" (157). Nostalgia not only aligns with the memoir's dual temporal framework but also provides it with greater significance and a sense of closure. Churchill's past acquires importance precisely because it is forever gone, making it the memoirist's responsibility to document and preserve it for posterity. In this way, nostalgia serves to bridge the gap between the transience of Churchill's journalistic sources and the memoir's need for lasting importance.

Finally, the link between Churchill's nostalgia and self-presentation requires closer scrutiny. Nostalgia is an idealised and selective treatment of the past, in which certain episodes are highlighted to shape a narrative (Massantini 193). Scholars suggest that the memories a nostalgic individual foregrounds reflect their current self-understanding or desired identity, rather than the objective importance of events (193). Memoirists may select memories of events that have influenced their current identity and are seen as vital for future self-conception (193). Yet, in the context of nostalgia, there is a sense that such moments symbolise a version of the self that no longer exists. According to Leonardo Massantini, "[a] nostalgic person yearns for the past because they perceive that something essential to their desired identity is missing in the present. The nostalgic individual locates this essential element in an unattainable past" (193). Churchill's nostalgia for the Victorian Age and Empire thus appears to be of significance for the autobiographical "I"'s self-perception. In light of the historical Churchill's diminishing political status around 1930, his identification with the dwindling Empire may reflect his inner tribulations at the time of writing. At the same time, by casting himself as a representative figure of Victorian Britain, as both a product of history and a bridge to the present, he asserts his ongoing political relevance to those wishing to resurrect a romanticised British past.

In sum, Churchill's *My Early Life* exhibits a complex interplay between journalistic immediacy and temporal distance. This tension between past and present is mediated by nostalgia, which allows Churchill to revive historical moments with vivid immediacy while

framing them as irretrievably lost. Churchill does not critically reflect on his past, as expected of a memoirist, but relives it through his auto-intertextual method. The result is a persona that is both participant and witness, a representative of Victorian ideals whose authority derives from his firsthand experience and his capacity to render history real for his readers. This effect of reality, however, is illusory, since Churchill's nostalgia produces an idealised distortion built on already compromised source material. The following chapter interrogates the truth claims of Churchill's memoir, analysing his strategies of verification, self-citation, and silence.

5. Truth in Times of War

The genres of journalism and life writing both lay claim to the truth. When reading a memoir, readers need to believe that the story is grounded in reality; otherwise, the genre would be indistinguishable from fiction (Couser, *Memoir* 55). In journalism, likewise, factuality is of utmost importance as readers expect to educate themselves on the basis of objective and verified information. Yet, the use of evidence, the construction of credibility, the role of personal memory, political and institutional pressures, and the perceived authority of each genre vary and result in different relationships to the ‘truth’. This chapter examines how these generic attributes converge and collide within the memoir, and how they ultimately affect Churchill’s self-presentation. In the following, I provide a theoretical contextualisation of each genre’s complicated truth regimes, before moving on to my close reading of *My Early Life*.

According to Philippe Lejeune, autobiography differs from fiction in two key aspects: firstly, the author’s personal details match those of the narrator; and secondly, the publisher implicitly confirms the authenticity of the author’s identity (Smith and Watson 11). When readers identify the author as the protagonist, they approach the text as autobiographical rather than fictional (11). This “autobiographical pact” leads readers to view the text as a true representation of the author’s life (11). Couser notes that this “pact” between reader and writer is not legally binding, and the author is not “swearing to tell the truth, all of the truth, and nothing but the truth” (*Memoir* 81). Minor inaccuracies may be forgiven, since “as its name suggests, memoir relies primarily on an inherently fallible faculty, human memory” (80). Memoir writing necessitates certain artistic liberties and storytelling abilities to bridge gaps in memory and craft compelling narratives (81). Additionally, the genre is, as previously noted, selective in its coverage of life events and experiences (81). Scholars such as Stanley Fish have further argued that even if autobiographers present false information, they are revealing deeper truths about themselves by doing so (Smith and Watson 15). Subjective truth may differ from objective facts. Nonetheless, memoir writers have an ethical obligation not to intentionally lie or deceive their readers (Couser, *Memoir* 81). Trust is central to the relationship between writer and reader, as autobiographical works rely on the writer maintaining credibility and presenting experiences that readers find believable (Smith and Watson 34).

In journalism, qualities such as reliability and factuality are equally significant to the reception of the genre (Dernbach 305). These attributes take on particular significance when considering journalism's core responsibilities, which are to deliver impartial information to the public, monitor political and economic powers, and represent disempowered segments of society (306). Yet, media scholars agree that complete objectivity in journalism is impossible, since journalism, too, requires storytelling and selection among a broad range of facts and topics (306, 320–21). Moreover, journalism's commitment to truth has fluctuated over time. The history of journalism is not linear, since it responds to and is shaped by historical and cultural contexts (Conboy 1–2). As Conboy writes, “there is not and never has been a single unifying activity to be thought of as journalism” (3). Churchill's war correspondence belongs to a particular period and style of journalism known as “New Journalism” (Rose 36; Griffiths, “Imperial Romance” 165). New Journalism emerged in the 1880s and represented a shift in journalistic style, characterised by “lightness of tone, an emphasis on the personal and the ‘sensational,’ and reliance on gimmicks to sell newspapers in high-stakes circulation wars” (Hampton 36–37). In previous years, the British press had been driven by an “educational ideal” that sought to inform readers and encourage critical debate (Hampton 9). Towards the end of the century, however, newspapers transformed from instruments of instruction into commercial entertainment media (Wilkinson 7). According to Mark Hampton, New Journalism created a new “epistemology of speed and sensationalism”: “In the period after 1880, concerns for instantaneous news and lively presentation often superseded previous concerns for depth and accuracy” (92). Churchill's journalism needs to be read in light of this culture of commercialism and spectacle.

Due to its subject matter and reporting conditions, war correspondence constitutes a special type of journalism. As Kevin Williams writes, “Censorship, denial of access and matters of operational security make war reporting different if not unusual” (*New History* x). During the Sudan and Boer Wars, in particular, war correspondence was heavily censored by the military before it was published in newspapers (Moorcraft 26, 31). Officially, censors ensured accuracy and prevented sensitive information from reaching enemy forces (Beaumont 271), but censorship also concealed military blunders and atrocities from the British public (288). War correspondents furthermore engaged in self-censorship because they relied on the goodwill of the military to access essential infrastructure (Wilkinson 12). This dependency,

combined with many correspondents' personal connections to the army, created strong incentives to portray military campaigns favourably (12). According to Paul Moorcraft, the military establishment expected journalists to prioritise patriotism over critical reporting (17). Rather than serving as independent investigators of military conduct, war correspondents were expected to legitimise imperial campaigns, helping to maintain public support and strengthen the relationship between the military, British citizens, and the government (21, 26). Hence, correspondents produced heavily distorted narratives, and, as Williams argues, "[w]ar reporting cannot be disentangled from war propaganda" (*New History* 9). As a politician, Churchill himself would later defend such a distortion of truth as necessary, stating that "[i]n wartime, truth is so precious that she should be attended by a bodyguard of lies" (Evans 48).

To circumvent censorship, correspondents shifted the focus from military strategy to dramatised tales of individual heroism (Beaumont 288–89). Even before the advent of New Journalism, war correspondents had mastered a sensational style of reporting (Waters, *Special Correspondence* 12). This came at the expense of factual reporting:

This approach to journalism inevitably involved an element of fiction, freely employing all the literary devices available to novelists and playwrights. There had to be a gripping plot, unforgettable characters, gorgeous settings, cleverly constructed dialogue, memorable turns of phrase, a strong and opinionated authorial voice, impressionistic commentary, and a fine sense of dramatic timing. To achieve these artistic goals, facts could be rearranged, embellished, and used selectively, though the main outline of the story was still supposed to conform (more or less) to reality. (Rose 37)

Griffiths argues that in the late Victorian era, the line between news and fiction was increasingly eroded (*New Journalism* 2), as there was a bi-directional "stylistic exchange" between journalism and novels (4): "The popular press was able to appeal to a mass readership by adopting features of novelistic discourse, while novelists adopted features more closely associated with newspapers for the same purpose" (5). Popular novelistic genres such as imperial quest romances, "which supplanted the three-volume novel as the major mode of novel-writing" (57), thus shaped journalistic representations of warfare and Empire (1–2, 17, 57, 78). The "novelisation of the news" (17) further illustrates how closely fact and fiction were intertwined in Victorian war reporting.

This contextualisation demonstrates that while both journalism and memoir claim commitment to factuality, neither should be accepted uncritically. This chapter does not aim to

accurately determine the truth value of Churchill's narrative, but to examine how 'truth' is negotiated through strategic citation of his war correspondence. First, I explore how Churchill's correspondence may bolster the truth claim of Churchill's memoir by serving as evidence and a memory aid. In the second subchapter, I then analyse Churchill's editorial treatment of previously censored or controversial source material, examining how he redresses the compromised factuality of his previous texts. This investigation reveals how Churchill's construction of credibility operates not just through the strategic citation of sources and realist detail, but through the careful omission of inconvenient truths that might complicate his heroic self-presentation.

5.1 Memory, Self-Citation, and the Construction of Credibility

In *My Early Life*, Churchill constructs the authority of his memoir not solely through memory but through the auto-intertextual incorporation of his earlier war correspondence. This section examines how his self-citations and practices of textual marking shape the memoir's perceived truth value. It argues that two marked self-citations authenticate particularly sensational episodes, while unmarked borrowings import the descriptive immediacy and precision of late Victorian special correspondence. The resulting realistic effect enhances the narrative's credibility yet strains the memoir's commitment to memory and retrospection, drawing the narrative toward the affective vividness of fiction.

In *My Early Life*'s preface, Churchill's narrating "I" frames the memoir as a true and original account of his formative years, explicitly situating it within the context of his earlier writings:

Various accounts having appeared from time to time of my early life and adventures, and I myself having published thirty years ago stories of the several campaigns in which I took part, and having written later about particular episodes, I have thought it right to bring the whole together in a single complete story; and to tell the tale, such as it is, anew. I have therefore not only searched my memory, but have most carefully verified my facts from the records which I possess. (*MEL* 5)

Churchill strategically presents his memoir as being constructed upon a foundation of existing "records," including his own previous work, while also claiming to offer a fresh and complete account of his early life. This allows him to preempt potential charges of self-plagiarism and reinforce the significance and truth value of his story, evidenced by the volume of existing literature. The assertion that he has "verified" his memory further strengthens the memoir's

claim to accuracy. Yet, the memoir's opening paragraph also foreshadows tensions between novelty and repetition, between first-hand testimony, memory, and retrospective self-fashioning. It is precisely in his handling of self-citation that this dynamic becomes most visible.

By marking only two instances of self-citation, Churchill exposes the memoir's central tension between documentary authority and the performance of originality. The longest example of intertextual citation is Churchill's retelling of his famous escape as a prisoner of war. Before telling the story, he announces: "I shall transcribe what I wrote at the time where I cannot improve upon it" (*MEL* 282). This is followed by a multiple-page-long verbatim citation of his war correspondence (cf. "How I Escaped from Pretoria" 5–6). The embedded text is distinguished typographically through single quotation marks and concludes with the remark: "I wrote these lines many years ago while the impression of the adventure was strong upon me" (*MEL* 290). These explicit markers clearly establish the text passage as an auto-intertextual quotation and thereby guide its reception. From the context, readers can discern that Churchill is referencing his writing for the *Morning Post*, written shortly after the events occurred. This enhances the credibility of the account, as it relies not on potentially unreliable memory of distant events, but on immediate, firsthand documentation. This framing strategy is even more explicit in Churchill's second marked passage. Before recounting his narrow escape from Boer gunfire, he states: "And here I had a most exciting adventure. Lest my memory should embroider the tale, I transcribe the words I wrote that same evening" (353). He then cites a substantial part of his war correspondence (cf. "Two Days with Brabazon" [28 May 1900] 5–6). Once again, the intertextual marking enhances credibility; it acknowledges the limits of memory while emphasising the immediacy and authenticity of the account. Given this rhetorical effect, it is striking that Churchill marks only two of his self-citations throughout the memoir. As noted in the theoretical discussion, auto-intertextual references are commonly unmarked, since authors seek to avoid drawing attention to self-reuse for fear of seeming repetitive or self-plagiarising (Isekenmeier 46). Churchill's decision may therefore indicate a deliberate effort to authenticate two of the memoir's most sensational episodes, or to acknowledge the citation of two particularly famous and well-known war letters. His account of the prison escape, in particular, had generated immense public interest and contributed significantly to his early fame (Griffiths, "Imperial Romance" 164; Wilkinson-

Latham 257–58). Churchill's selective marking of his self-citations thus reveals a delicate narrative balancing act: he must draw upon his earlier writing to lend immediacy and authority to his memoir, yet simultaneously obscure the extent of this dependence to sustain the impression, asserted in his preface, that he has 'told the tale anew'.

Beyond explicit self-citation, Churchill's unmarked incorporation of journalistic material also bolsters credibility by functioning as a memory aid. In *My Early Life*, Churchill's account of his war reporting years draws from a wealth of details originally documented in his correspondence, such as exact dates, times, locations, numbers, maps, and the names of other participants and eyewitnesses. Such precise information, which is typically not preserved by memory alone, enables readers to fact-check the basic framework of the story. Churchill's journalistic source material furthermore allows him to access his immediate impressions and sensations, aspects that memory typically discards or distorts over time. The following example from *My Early Life* is a nearly verbatim reproduction of Churchill's Cuban correspondence, published in the *Morning Post* on 27 December 1895 (cf. Woods, *War Correspondent* 17):

At eight o'clock the head of the Spanish column debouched from the broken ground into open country. A broad grass ride with a wire fence on one side and a row of little stunted trees on the other ran from the beginning of the plain to the enemy's line. On each side of the ride were broad fields of rank grass, waist-high. Half-way up the ride, which was about a mile long and on the right-hand side, was a grove of about a hundred palm trees. At the end of the ride and at right angles to it was a low, long hill, surmounted by a rail fence and backed by the dense forests. . . . The cavalry went to the right of the ride and the artillery proceeded up the centre. The General, his staff and his two British visitors, advanced solemnly up the ride about 50 yards in the rear of the firing line. The second battalion followed the guns in column of companies. For 300 yards there was no firing. Then from the distant crest line came a lot of little puffs of smoke, followed immediately by the report of the insurgent rifles. Twice this happened, and then the enemy's fire became continuous and spread right and left along his whole position. (*MEL* 96)

The precise topographical description, distances, and time all replicate the eyewitness mode of late Victorian war correspondence, rather than autobiographical retrospection. More than thirty years later, it is unlikely that Churchill would be able to recollect the minute details of his surroundings or the precise troop formations. Human memory does not work in this way. As Couser notes, exceptionally clear memories of one-time events often prove inaccurate, and we usually remember recurring rather than discrete events (*Memoir* 73). Through his war correspondence, Churchill is, however, able to access his past in a way that likely surpasses

his memory of events. Seen in this light, war correspondence can serve as a memory aid, supplying almost photographic detail to Churchill's narrative.

By importing this descriptive journalistic style, Churchill replicates the truth effect of special correspondence. Journalists are typically considered credible if they are eyewitnesses to the events they describe (Dernbach 305). In Victorian special correspondence, in particular, "[t]he practice of eye-witnessing and its compelling representation in print through graphic description were crucial. The on-site presence of the special [correspondent] helped to constitute the authority of his report, enabling it to lay claim to the power of the real" (Waters, *Special Correspondence* 7). Vivid, detail-rich narrative thus served to enhance the credibility of war correspondence by establishing that the reporter was a firsthand witness to real events. This perceived credibility, however, does not amount to neutral or factual reporting. As Williams points out, "Eyewitnessing war is about engaging people's feelings at the rawest level. It demands emotional engagement, both in terms of writing the story and gathering the material which contradicts the commitment to objectivity" (*New History* 194). The goal of special correspondence was less to document events with factual precision than to produce a compelling appearance of reality for readers who were far from the front (Waters, *Special Correspondence* 8). John Carey notes that "eye-witness accounts have the feel of truth because they are quick, subjective and incomplete, unlike 'objective' or reconstituted history, which is laborious but dead" (qtd. in Waters, *Special Correspondence* 7). Eyewitness journalism thus conveyed a truth effect, rather than factuality.

Yet, this strategy also creates generic tension. While vivid details strengthened the perceived truthfulness of war correspondence, this does not necessarily translate to the memoir genre. Couser, when discussing "high-definition autobiography", finds that excessive detail weakens the credibility of an autobiographical narrative (*Memoir* 73, 78). This is because the memoir genre relies on memory and retrospection, whereas scenic descriptions are more typically associated with fiction genres (77–78). According to Couser, "there is some danger in the tendency of contemporary memoir to be written, and to encourage being read, like fiction. At some point, readers who expect something different from memoir in the way of truth value may begin to question what they are reading" (77). Churchill mitigates this risk by framing his memoir as built on previous records and by selectively marking his citations. Nonetheless, the narrative often strains credibility, reading more like an adventure novel than an autobiographical account.

In summary, Churchill's incorporation of war correspondence both reinforces and complicates the memoir's truth claims. On the one hand, Churchill's narrating "I" draws on his correspondence in order to authenticate and reinforce his narrative. His explicit citations of his previous texts are framed as granting unmediated access to past events, untainted by the distortions of memory. Thereby, Churchill fashions himself as a trustworthy narrator and reliable witness. On the other hand, Churchill's widespread incorporation of unacknowledged war correspondence may at times undermine the memoir's credibility. By marking only a few emblematic episodes, he authenticates his most sensational moments while obscuring the broader pattern of intertextual dependence that enables their vividness. His descriptions of granular details and eyewitness sensations make the account appear extraordinarily sharp and realistic, but are out of place in a genre that is supposed to primarily rely on personal recollection. Rose quotes Karen Roggenkamp's observation that "[w]hat reporters manufactured was something that looked a lot like fiction, read like fiction, and entertained like fiction but that was ultimately, they argued, better than fiction, because it was, after all, 'real'" (38). This style of writing, Rose argues, "was the template that Churchill followed throughout his authorial life – not just in what he wrote for publication, but also in his correspondence and government memoranda" (38). With respect to the memoir genre, Couser warns that such writing risks obscuring the crucial boundary between fact and fiction (*Memoir* 75). Yet, this ontological ambiguity ultimately contributes to Churchill's self-mythologising, enabling him to shape his own past liberally while maintaining claims to historical accuracy.

So far, I have examined Churchill's war correspondence as a source, allowing him to authenticate and supplement his memories. Yet, as explained in the introduction to this chapter, Churchill's source material was heavily compromised by censorship and propaganda. The following analysis, therefore, examines Churchill's editorial process, exploring how he handles previously censored material and whether he challenges or perpetuates the official narratives embedded in his original reports.

5.2 Editing the Past: The Impact of (Self-)Censorship

A direct comparison between Churchill's war correspondence and his memoir reveals the genetic dimension of his auto-intertextual reuse, exposing where he copies, rewrites or omits his original reporting. Since *My Early Life* was published three decades after the imperial wars it features, Churchill was technically free to break the silences imposed on him during his time as a war correspondent. Yet, a comparison of Churchill's correspondence with his memoir does not reveal a simple progression from censorship to frank disclosure, but a process of retrospective sanitisation. Rare moments of moral unease and muted criticism that surface in his correspondence are omitted, softened, or aestheticised in the memoir. This chapter investigates how Churchill negotiates the compromised truth status of his sources and examines the impact of official narratives in a genre built on self-disclosure. Focusing on Churchill's treatment of particularly controversial episodes during the Sudan and Boer Wars, I argue that the memoir replaces external censorship with a more internalised form of narrative management.

Churchill's Sudan correspondence makes for an interesting case study because he took measures to evade censorship at the time. In the Sudan, Churchill acted as an "embedded correspondent", employed both as a soldier in the British army and war correspondent for the *Morning Post* (Toye, "Golden Age" 161). As Toye notes, "this type of dual role was by no means uncommon but it did not exactly make for objective journalism" (161). Sir Herbert Kitchener, the general in charge of the Sudan campaign, disliked war correspondents and systematically obstructed their work (Knightley 54). He subjected correspondents to the same dangers as soldiers, restricted their communication to 200 words daily, and provided them with minimal assistance or information (54). Churchill, however, was able to evade military control by disguising his reports as the personal letters of a soldier (Moorcraft 26) and publishing them anonymously. As Edward Spiers explains, letters were treated differently by the army than official journalism: "Letter-writing from the front, which was mainly passed on by the *recipient* to metropolitan or local newspapers . . . came into a different category. The army appreciated that soldiers wanted to receive correspondence from family and friends, and that a two-way flow of correspondence could sustain morale during an overseas campaign" (6). Accordingly, some of Churchill's disguised letters from the Sudan include more critical commentary and graphic detail than typical.

Notably, Churchill's war letters from Sudan contain mild criticism of the British army. One example is Churchill's condemnation of revenge-driven destruction carried out under the command of Kitchener. In September 1898, Kitchener had given orders to destroy the Sudanese Mahdi's tomb and desecrate the corpse (Moorcraft 19). In his correspondence, Churchill disapproves of the demolition of the tomb, deeming it a "wasteful folly" and "mania" ("The Reconnaissance of Kerreri" 6). Later, he reflects: "This place had been for more than ten years the most sacred and holy thing that the people of Soudan knew of . . . And we had deliberately destroyed and profaned it. Was this a worthy or a dignified revenge?" ("The City of Omdurman" 6). His correspondence also features a more oblique reference to the mutilation of the Mahdi's corpse: "I have even heard a darker story concerning this Tomb. It is rumoured that the body has since been exhumed and decapitated. But we must not believe this. The civilisation which can direct the shrapnel shell must not war with the dead" (6). Woods remarks that "Churchill's attacks on Kitchener, particularly with regard to the desecration of the Mahdi's Tomb in Omdurman and the decapitation of the Mahdi's corpse, were fairly mild in the dispatches, as Churchill had not had time to verify his information" (*War Correspondent* xxiii). When Churchill wrote his memoir, knowledge of these atrocities was widespread. They had sparked public outcry at the time, including criticism from Queen Victoria (Moorcraft 19; Rose 61).

Yet, Churchill's criticism of the army's conduct is largely absent from *My Early Life*, which presents a romanticised account of the Sudan campaign and the battle of Omdurman. Churchill only briefly touches on the incidents in a later chapter, when recounting the inception of *The River War*, his history of the campaign: "Being now free from military discipline, I was able to write what I thought about Lord Kitchener without fear, favour or affection, and I certainly did so. I had been scandalized by his desecration of the Mahdi's Tomb and the barbarous manner in which he had carried off the Mahdi's head in a kerosene-can as a trophy" (*MEL* 241). Yet, as Rose and Woods point out, Churchill entirely removed his criticisms from the second edition of *The River War*, published in 1902 (Rose 61; Woods, *War Correspondent* xxiii). Rose speculates that "as a Conservative MP, he found it prudent to tone down his questioning of the imperialist adventure" (61). Woods, too, remarks that "by then Churchill was a member of Parliament, and perhaps other considerations were more important" (xxiii). With respect to *My Early Life*, any sustained reference to the army's

cruelty would have conflicted with Churchill's nostalgic portrayal of Britain's imperial past. Rose's and Woods's observations suggest that as an establishment figure, Churchill may have had political incentives for self-censorship by the time he wrote his memoir.

Churchill's correspondence following the battle of Omdurman furthermore reveals his momentary disillusionment with war itself (Rose 50; Griffiths, "Imperial Romance" 176–77), a perspective that is missing from his autobiographical reconstruction. At Omdurman, the Anglo-Egyptian army under Kitchener fought the Sudanese Mahdists – also known as dervishes – with vastly superior weaponry, resulting in what a contemporary journalist described as "not a battle, but an execution" (Moorcraft 26). As Griffiths summarises, "In under three hours, between ten and eleven thousand Mahdist fighters were killed, and approximately sixteen thousand were wounded. The Anglo-Egyptian army, by contrast, suffered just forty-eight fatal casualties" ("Imperial Romance" 166). The battle's mechanised and profoundly unequal nature presented a considerable challenge for war correspondents and, according to Griffiths, marks the "beginning of the end for imperial romance" (178). Churchill devotes one letter to his impressions of the scene three days after the fighting. The dispatch includes graphic and harrowing descriptions of the battlefield strewn with dead and wounded Sudanese fighters ("The Battlefield" 5–6). The Mahdists, he acknowledges, were "destroyed, not conquered by machinery. At such sights the triumph of victory faded on the mind and a mournful feeling of disgust grew stronger" (6). He remarks: "I have tried to gild war, and to solace myself for the loss of dear and gallant friends, with the thought that a soldier's death for a cause that he believes in will count for much, whatever may be beyond this world. . . . But there was nothing *dulce et decorum* about the Dervish dead. Nothing of the dignity of unconquerable manhood. All was filthy corruption" (5). The letter thus constitutes a rare moment in which Churchill confronts the brutal realities of imperial warfare.

In *My Early Life*, Churchill does not impart such feelings or disturbing impressions to his readers. His account of Omdurman ends without any description of its aftermath, obscuring the horrors of war. What is more, Churchill nostalgically recasts the battle as romantic. He writes that "[n]othing like the Battle of Omdurman will ever be seen again. It was the last link in the long chain of those spectacular conflicts whose vivid and majestic splendour has done so much to invest war with glamour" (*MEL* 183). Churchill relies on the

stylistic conventions of the war correspondence genre to craft, as Rose puts it, a “gorgeous Impressionist painting” (61):

From the rocky hills which here and there flanked the great river the whole scene lay revealed in minute detail, curiously twisted, blurred and interspersed with phantom waters by the mirage. The finite and concrete presented itself in the most keenly-chiselled forms, and then dissolved in a shimmer of unreality and illusion. Long streaks of gleaming water, where we knew there was only desert, cut across the knees or the waists of marching troops. Batteries of artillery or long columns of cavalry emerged from a filmy world of uneven crystal on to the hard yellow-ochre sand, and took up their positions amid jagged red-black rocks with violet shadows. Over all the immense dome of the sky, dun to turquoise, turquoise to deepest blue, pierced by the flaming sun, weighed hard and heavy on marching necks and shoulders. (*MEL* 183)

Churchill’s scenery has a dreamlike quality of “unreality and illusion”; it acknowledges, even as it performs, the artificiality of his recollection. By describing the battlefield as distorted by mirage, Churchill transforms the problem of distorted memory into an aesthetic scenery. This “shimmer of unreality,” then, is a rhetorical device that allows Churchill to create a romantic illusion of imperial war. Rose observes that “Churchill now remembered Omdurman as the last romantic battle of the nineteenth century. But when one reads his early drafts, it looks more like the first infernal battle of the twentieth century” (61–62). Rather than presenting an equally or even more critical account of Omdurman, Churchill’s memoir erases any moral ambiguity.

During the Boer War, Churchill’s war correspondence was subjected to much stricter censorship regulations. The Boer War has been considered the “first ‘mass media war’”; it was covered by an unprecedentedly large number of correspondents and, for the first time, captured through photography and film (Williams, *New History* 60–61). This complicated efforts by officials to manage public narratives during the initially widely unpopular conflict marked by guerrilla warfare and few clear victories (61–62). Hence, strict measures of censorship and control were put in place to ensure that reporters produced favourable stories highlighting British valour and success (61–62). British authorities furthermore used punitive measures, such as withdrawing accreditation or blocking information access, to control uncooperative correspondents (62). Under Kitchener’s command, soldiers were prohibited from talking to correspondents about the war and the autonomy of correspondents was systematically curtailed (62). This strict control encouraged correspondents to adopt self-censorship practices that exceeded concerns of tactical confidentiality (62). In his memoir,

Churchill downplays the impact of censorship on his war correspondence: “My pass was granted . . . with the proviso, however, that before taking up my duties as war-correspondent I should receive an admonition from the Military Secretary to the Commander-in-Chief against reckless and uncharitable criticism . . . and from that moment had entire liberty to move where I would, and, subject to mild censorship, write what I chose” (*MEL* 349). His war letters, however, betray a strong concern for appeasing the British public and military in the light of British military defeats, such as the battle at Spion Kop.

In his war report on Spion Kop, Churchill transforms a military loss into a moral test, using language of racial virtue and national duty to suppress dissent. He appeals to his readers’ nationalist pride and sense of duty to forestall any criticism: “It is the remarkable characteristic of strong races, as of honourable men, to keep tempers in the face of disappointment, and never to lose a just sense of proportion; and it is, moreover, the duty of every citizen in times of trouble to do or say or even to think nothing that can weaken or discourage the energies of the State” (“Five Days’ Action at Spion Kop” 8). In linking restraint to “strong races” and “honourable men,” Churchill converts self-censorship into an imperial virtue. Losses are framed as serving a larger purpose, minimising the human cost of imperial expansion. As Churchill callously writes, “let no one despair of the Empire because a few thousand soldiers are killed, wounded, or captured” (8). He furthermore emphasises the bravery of the soldiers and urges his readers to extend leniency toward the generals:

It redounds to the honour of the soldiers, though not greatly to that of the generals. But when all that will be written about this has been written, and all bitter words have been said by the people who never do anything themselves, the wise and just citizen will remember that these same generals are, after all, brave, capable, noble English gentlemen, trying their best to carry through a task which may prove to be impossible, and is certainly the hardest ever set to men. (“Five Days’ Action at Spion Kop” 8)

Churchill further dismisses potential critics by implying that judgment is reserved for participants. He defends the generals responsible by emphasising their social standing and character, and reframes failure as a consequence of challenging circumstances rather than incompetence. As Toye points out, “Churchill’s attitude towards [General] Buller and Spion Kop reminds us once again that he viewed things through a nationalist-imperialist lens; he sought not merely to report events but to spin them in the best interests of the British cause” (*Life in the News* 43). In his war correspondence, Churchill thus manages public opinion while shielding the establishment from accountability.

Churchill's retrospective account of Spion Kop in *My Early Life* appears more critical than his wartime journalism, yet it ultimately reproduces the same protective logic that had shaped his earlier reporting. Compared to his correspondence, Churchill tones down his nationalist and racist rhetoric and presents a mildly disapproving perspective on the battle. Churchill's own previous efforts notwithstanding, the fight at Spion Kop did attract criticism. As Kenneth Morgan writes, "By March 1900, for all the work of the censors, there was fierce criticism of Buller, White, and other British generals, whose incompetence had led to so many disastrous defeats down to that at Spion Kop. . . . The heavy British casualties in the disaster at Spion Kop, for instance, were certainly given the fullest coverage" (4). This climate of public criticism meant that Churchill's later account did not intervene in an ongoing debate but responded to an already consolidated narrative of failure. His autobiographical account of the battle at Spion Kop oscillates between strong criticism of the army's conduct and defence of the actors involved. After retelling his personal impressions of the battle in close alignment with his *Morning Post* article, Churchill's autobiographical "I" concludes the scene as follows:

The General [Warren] was asleep. I put my hand on his shoulder and woke him up. 'Colonel Thorneycroft is here, sir.' He took it all very calmly. He was a charming old gentleman. I was genuinely sorry for him. I was also sorry for the army. Colonel Thorneycroft erred gravely in retiring against his orders from the position he had so nobly held by the sacrifices of his troops. His extraordinary personal bravery throughout the day and the fact that his resolution had alone prevented a fatal surrender more than once during the action were held to condone and cover a military crime. It was certainly not for those who had left him so long without definite orders or any contact to lay the blame on him. A young active divisional general, having made all plans for the relief, would have joined him on the summit at nightfall and settled everything in person. A cruel misfortune would thus have been averted.
(*MEL* 329)

On the one hand, he condemns Thorneycroft's retreat as a grave error and "military crime". These remarks are far more accusatory than his previous correspondence permitted. On the other hand, he mitigates his judgment by crediting Thorneycroft's "extraordinary personal bravery" and "resolution" and characterising Warren as a "charming old gentleman," which humanises the command structure. By expressing sympathy for Warren and "the army" and framing the event as a "misfortune" instead of incompetence, he softens his indictment. Churchill's account thus performs a careful balancing act. While the retrospective distance from events allows and requires a degree of critical revaluation, this criticism is immediately

moderated by a rhetoric of sympathy, personalisation, and contingency. Churchill's reassessment thus ultimately maintains a protective stance. The shift from correspondent to memoirist replaces external censorship with an internalised one. Churchill continues to shield the institutional authority of the British Army and, by extension, defends his own past participation and reporting of the campaign.

Lastly, only one case of self-censorship in Churchill's correspondence is openly addressed and rectified in *My Early Life*. After Churchill recounts his prison escape and the first stage of his flight through Boer territory, his correspondence includes the following remark: "I cannot now relate the strange circumstances which followed, and which changed my nearly hopeless position into one of superior advantage. But after the war is over I shall hope to somewhat lengthen this account, and so remarkable will the addition be that I cannot believe the reader will complain" ("How I Escaped from Pretoria" 5). In his memoir, Churchill circles back to this point:

I wrote these lines many years ago while the impression of the adventure was strong upon me. Then I could tell no more. To have done so would have compromised the liberty and perhaps the lives of those who had helped me. For many years these reasons have disappeared. The time has come when I can relate the events which followed, and which changed my nearly hopeless position into one of superior advantage. (*MEL* 290)

The reason for his previous self-censorship, as he explains to his readers, was to protect the identity of an English miner living on Boer land who helped him escape (297). The initial self-censorship is again presented as a virtue, and Churchill's restoration of the omitted episode as a fulfilment of an earlier promise to the reader. What distinguishes this instance of censorship from the others is that the stakes are individual rather than political, and do not affect him personally. In revisiting his earlier omission, Churchill discloses information that no longer threatens anyone's safety or challenges authority. His decision to break the silence entails no confrontation with the establishment, no moral reckoning with imperialism, and no exposure of suppressed wrongdoing.

Overall, this comparison of Churchill's correspondence and his memoir shows that (self-)censorship not only shapes his war reporting but also his autobiographical retelling. While his wartime dispatches were shaped by official censorship and the commercial demand for uplifting stories, they nonetheless contain moments of disillusionment that complicate the image of imperial heroism. Churchill's memoir largely sustains, rather than dismantles, the

silences of his earlier writing and omits any discordant notes. Criticism of Kitchener and any admission of moral unease after Omdurman are replaced by a painterly romanticism. His recollection of Spion Kop, though more critical than his original report, ultimately reaffirms sympathy with the military authorities he once served. As Woods observes, “there is a deceptive blandness, a rosy impressionistic haze over his backward glance. Many events are over-simplified, others have their sting safely drawn” (122). This shows how official narratives are sustained not only through external coercion but through personal complicity. Churchill selectively quotes and overwrites his own texts to reconcile negative memories with a coherent persona and a romanticised vision of empire. The constraints of war correspondence, in retrospect, become tools for sustaining the mythical figure of the imperial hero. The following chapter takes a closer look at Churchill’s depiction of imperial warfare and the war correspondent persona.

6. Depicting War and the Correspondent

In the previous chapter, I have examined how Churchill references, cites, and edits his sources and highlighted some of the silences that characterise his war correspondence and his later memoir. Thereby, I have shown that certain aspects of warfare, such as criticism of British military malfeasance, are suppressed by censors and by Churchill himself. This chapter builds on the previous chapter by focusing on how Churchill actively depicts war and his own role as a correspondent, rather than what he excludes. As I will show in this chapter, the genre of war correspondence provided standardised tropes and themes that recur in newspapers at the time and resulted in a homogenised, sanitised perception of imperial warfare and the role of the war correspondent. In *My Early Life*, Churchill draws on these same generic templates to cast himself as a heroic figure engaged in ostensibly morally unambiguous ‘adventures’.

War correspondents’ representations of conflict were not merely shaped by genre conventions and the constraints of censorship but by prevalent imperialist attitudes. As Roger Stearn argues, correspondents “saw British war as, usually, justified, and as challenge, adventure, heroism and glory. They experienced and depicted war through the assumptions of their ideology” (151). This ideological framework both informed and reflected broader British public attitudes towards imperial warfare. While Wilkinson acknowledges the pressures under which correspondents operated, he contends that editors and military authorities cannot enforce such imagery without the assent and cooperation of a commercial audience, which complicates arguments about manipulation and propaganda (12). Indeed, Phillip Knightley notes that “public demand for these reports was immense – providing they were written mainly as narratives of adventure, without too much political comment or moralising to interrupt the narrative” (42). At the same time, imperialist ideology solidified into recognisable generic templates. Many correspondents repeatedly relied on familiar tropes and produced accounts that rendered battles strikingly similar, regardless of the location and broader context (Mathews 155). Thus, the depiction of war in such correspondence emerges from the interplay of imperialist ideology and genre.

The heroic figure of the war correspondent, too, emerges from this context of imperialist ideology and commercial demand. As Stearn writes, “[t]he Victorian era was one of hero worship and myth-making, and war correspondents contributed much to the making of popular military heroes. The press also promoted a cult of the war correspondent as hero: as

the dashing adventurer who bravely risked death to bring battle news and who sometimes died on service” (151). From its mid-nineteenth-century beginnings, the profession rapidly acquired a distinctive prestige, spawning myths and celebrities, and by the 1870s, British war correspondents routinely cast themselves as the heroes of their stories (Korte 11–12, 74). According to Rose, by the end of the nineteenth century, newspapers distinguished between detached reporters and correspondents, whose personal viewpoint dominated the narrative: “A reporter merely reports the story; a correspondent is himself the story” (37). Correspondents further advertised themselves through their appearance, illustrations, memoirs, and public lectures that amplified both income and reputation (Stearn 153; Williams, *New History* 18). As Barbara Korte argues, such representations, practices, and self-perceptions formed a mutually reinforcing “cultural circuit” (15–16), shaping both how correspondents were imagined and how they actually performed their roles.

Churchill, writing and acting during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was situated in a culture that valorised the war correspondent as a masculine imperial hero. His self-fashioning is not purely personal or individual but rather taps into these cultural ideals. In this sense, the war correspondent not only functions as a generic template but also as an ideological construct. At the time of narrating the memoir, however, this particular persona has lost some of its cultural relevance. Churchill thus revives an outdated model of literary identity, repurposing it for his memoir. In what follows, I move from the templates structuring Churchill’s battle narratives to his adaptation of the correspondent-as-hero narrative, while assessing how these repurposings of genre conventions affect his memoir and autobiographical persona.

6.1 “A Sporting Element in a Splendid Game”: Writing War

Churchill’s romanticised depictions of imperial warfare do not merely provide the backdrop to his early life; they enable his heroic self-fashioning in *My Early Life*. As previously established, imperial war is a central theme through which Churchill aligns his identity with the British Empire. This section analyses how Churchill’s depiction of war in his memoir draws on the genre conventions of war reporting. Rather than simply reusing content, Churchill actively adopts the genre codes of late-Victorian war correspondence designed to make imperial war feel exciting, natural, and beneficial. The resulting glorification of war

supplies the emotional and moral preconditions for the correspondent-as-hero figure analysed in section 6.2.

This section closely engages with Glenn Wilkinson's study *Depictions and Images of War in Edwardian Newspapers, 1899–1914*. Wilkinson examines recurring themes in war correspondence and visual war imagery from the Edwardian era, including the Boer War, arguing that the press commonly stylised combat through metaphors to ensure that readers were emotionally and intellectually distanced from the horrors of war (14). Although his time frame begins towards the end of Churchill's career as a correspondent, the typical themes and strategies he discusses predate that window (xi), permeate Churchill's war journalism, and later resurface in the memoir. Wilkinson's analysis encompasses the depiction of opposing forces; the positive reframing of war as natural and beneficial; the use of sport, games, and theatre metaphors; and the depiction of death and physical violence. The following section examines these dimensions in *My Early Life*.

A close analysis of Churchill's memoir shows that he sustains the imperial hierarchies and racialised imagery of his wartime journalism. In the Victorian and Edwardian period, Britain's colonised opponents were typically framed in accordance with the Empire's self-image as a civilising power (Wilkinson 18). As Stearn writes, army officers and war correspondents alike shared "implicit Social Darwinism and proudly ethnocentric imperial and racial beliefs, assuming 'Anglo-Saxon' superiority and an ethnic hierarchy which was partly moral and martial" (149). The press thus commonly cast the British army as the agent of civilisation and lawful order, whereas imperial adversaries were described as "uncivilised," "barbaric," and unruly (Wilkinson 18–20). Churchill's memoir frequently incorporates this kind of racist rhetoric. In *My Early Life*, Churchill characterises Pathan tribes as "strange people" with "all sorts of horrible customs and frightful revenges" (140). He labels a Pathan warrior as a "savage" (153) and contends that "the wild rifle-armed clansmen" inhabit "savage mountains" (140). A wounded Sikh is described as a "tragic golliwog" (42). The Sudanese Mahdists are depicted as "dark, cowed figures, like monks on horseback – ugly, sinister brutes with long spears" (197). Wilkinson notes that the Boers were treated more favourably by the British press, since they were considered white Europeans (20). Nevertheless, Churchill describes them as "grim, hairy, and terrible" (MEL 355) – a direct citation from his correspondence ("Two Days with Brabazon" [28 May 1900] 5) – and refers

to a “Boer-infested countryside” (*MEL* 359), thus likening Boers to insects. Churchill’s memoir thus builds on racist imperial rhetoric characteristic of Victorian and Edwardian war reporting.

Scholars have previously sought to diminish this dimension of *My Early Life*. Sell, for instance, finds the memoir “ethically unimpeachable,” arguing that Churchill “did nothing to hide his strongly remaining attachment to the ideology within which he had grown up, yet clearly recognized the enormous changes which had taken place, and without expecting or even hoping to turn the clock back” (247). Similarly, Sullivan contends that “Churchill’s intent was not to offer a simple and reassuring narrative that resolved the clash of civilizations into Britain’s civilizing mission,” but that he “complicated just such a narrative” – for instance, by criticising Kitchener’s “barbarous” conduct (11–12). Yet recognising imperial decline or occasionally criticising British brutality does not erase the fact that Churchill’s narrative voice continues to rely on the vocabulary that once structured his correspondence. *My Early Life*’s generic framework, however, allows him to disclaim responsibility for that rhetoric. His preface states: “If these opinions conflict with those now generally accepted, they must be taken merely as representing a phase in my early life, and not in any respect, except where the context warrants, as modern pronouncements” (*MEL* 5). The memoir’s historical distance thus allows Churchill both to perpetuate and to excuse the rhetoric of empire, to reassert his former convictions under the protective guise of autobiographical distance.

The rhetorical continuity between Churchill’s war correspondence and *My Early Life* is evident not only in his depiction of colonised peoples but also in the way he naturalises warfare itself. A further rhetorical device for legitimising imperial warfare in late Victorian war reporting was to present war as “natural” (Wilkinson 44). Towards the end of the nineteenth century, scholars had advanced two claims about war inspired by Charles Darwin: first, that war is a natural and unavoidable feature of human society and second, that the fate of nations follows the logic of natural selection (43). Such views were reflected in contemporary newspaper coverage, which framed warfare as a natural and beneficial phenomenon (43). One strategy was to present war as a “component of the human condition,” comparable to an interpersonal argument or minor physical altercation (44). In *My Early Life*, Churchill refers to “quarrels” between Pathan tribes and the British Government (147),

reflects that “[g]reat quarrels . . . often arise from small occasions but never from small causes” (242), and positions himself “against the Pacifists during the quarrel, and against the Jingoists at its close” (346). As Wilkinson points out, labelling war as a “quarrel” serves to domesticate large-scale violence by linking war to commonplace, everyday conflicts (45).

A second, related feature of contemporary war correspondence was the pervasive use of nature and weather metaphors to describe war and the impact of weapons (50–51). In his memoir, Churchill uses common phrases like “rifle-storm” (*MEL* 197) and “a hail of bullets” (334). Such images, as Wilkinson explains, “conveyed the impression that, like the weather, a battle was a violent display of power, and that it was natural, fleeting and, though possibly inconvenient, ultimately beneficial” (51). Churchill further extends the nature imagery to human actions. Examples include his observations that “[t]he enemy come on like the sea” (*MEL* 196) and that “[s]treams of wounded . . . trickled and even flowed down the hill, at the foot of which two hospital villages of tents and wagons were rapidly growing” (326) – another nearly verbatim quotation from his correspondence (“Five Days’ Action at Spion Kop” 8). Through such organic and passive phrasing, *My Early Life* transforms deliberate acts of warfare into impersonal biological processes, as something to be accepted as part of the natural order.

A comparable rhetorical strategy that Churchill’s memoir inherits from late-Victorian war correspondence is the association of war with sport and games as outlined by Wilkinson (69–89). As Wilkinson explains, this trend reflected both the formalisation of leisure sports and the Social Darwinist belief that warfare invigorated individuals and nations (88). Sporting metaphors thus served to legitimise imperial warfare and to minimise its brutality by presenting it as “fun” and “exciting” (88). When Churchill reflects on his earlier years, he admits that “to the great mass of those who took part in the little wars of Britain in those vanished light-hearted days, this was only a sporting element in a splendid game” (*MEL* 192). This perspective shapes Churchill’s depictions of imperial warfare throughout the memoir. Comparing modern warfare to earlier wars, Churchill laments that war “has been completely spoilt”: “From the moment Democracy was admitted to, or rather forced itself upon the battlefield, War ceased to be a gentleman’s game” (74). He furthermore likens imperial violence to steeplechasing: “fighting the poor Indians, compared with taking part in a real European war, was only like riding in a paper-chase instead of in the Grand National” (53).

Later, he compares it to children's play: "Day after day we rode out in the early morning on one flank or another and played about with the Boers" (333). The association of war and children's play was common in Edwardian newspapers and signalled to readers that warfare was safe, harmless, and entertaining (Wilkinson 71–72). Churchill's statement that "we passed a pleasant day skirmishing with the Boers" (*MEL* 353) reinforces this impression by likening warfare to a leisure activity.

Other aspects of the gamification of war include references to gambling, emphasising the element of luck involved (Wilkinson 79). In his memoir, Churchill recalls being excited "to play at hazard from moment to moment with death and wounds" (*MEL* 85). After a narrow escape from bullets, Churchill writes that "it was with a feeling of relief that I turned the corner of the further kopje and found I had thrown double sixes again." (*MEL* 356; cf. "Two Days with Brabazon" [28 May 1900] 6). Simultaneously, war was frequently conceptualised as a strategic game of chess and newspapers published strategic maps to reinforce this image (Wilkinson 80–81). Like his war correspondence, Churchill's memoir features multiple strategic maps that illustrate geographic locations and army manoeuvres. Such maps allowed newspaper readers to view war from a bird's eye perspective and, similarly to a chess game, "anticipate, contradict or question 'moves' made" (Wilkinson 81). Overall, the comparison of war to sport and games, so Wilkinson, served to both captivate readers and obscure the true nature of war (89), a strategy that Churchill implements in his memoir. Far from merely recalling the outlook of his youth, *My Early Life* reanimates the rhetoric through which imperialism was legitimised.

A third strategy through which Churchill romanticises imperial warfare in *My Early Life* is the depiction of battle as theatre, transforming violence into a controlled and dramatic spectacle. This depiction of war as theatre was a common trope in war reporting at the time (Wilkinson 91). Standard images "include the portrayal of war as 'dramatic', in the way that surprising events and the image of war were described as a form of 'drama', and, more specifically, the presentation of war as a 'stage play' or comic entertainment with 'scenes', 'curtains', 'actors' and an 'audience'" (95). In his memoir, Churchill describes the battlefield as an "arena" (*MEL* 190, 198), as a "gently-sloping amphitheatre" (198), a "theatre of operations" (286) and refers to the "theatre of war" (343, 351). The Sudan War is described as a "long drama" (173) with actors: "I paused in Cairo for a fortnight to collect materials for my

book and enlist the co-operation of several important actors in the Soudan drama” (226). The capitulation of Pretoria, in Churchill’s words, “resembled the end of an Adelphi melodrama” (*MEL* 366; cf. “The Capture of Pretoria” 6). Additionally, Churchill frequently refers to his impressions of war as “scenes” (e.g. *MEL* 195, 196, 197). His depictions of sunrises preceding battles (89, 194) constitute a further example of theatre imagery. Churchill explicitly associates sunrise with a theatre curtain: “There is nothing like the dawn. The quarter of an hour before the curtain is lifted upon an unknowable situation is an intense experience of war” (194). Before the start of the Boer War, he reflects that “[t]he curtain would rise again on the world’s scene” (249). According to Wilkinson, this conceptualisation of war as a theatre production has a distancing effect for both correspondents and readers: “The ‘curtain’ represents the ‘fourth wall’ through which audiences watch the action on stage. It reminds them that the performance is illusory, no matter how realistic it appears, and that when the entertainment ends, they will resume their ordinary routine” (100). At the same time, theatrical imagery recast war as a dramatic spectacle for leisurely consumption (95, 102). Like the gamification and naturalisation of war discussed above, Churchill’s use of theatre imagery aestheticises imperial violence, converting conflict into a distant, entertaining narrative.

Lastly, a final strategy of war reporting that Churchill reproduces in his memoir is the aestheticised portrayal of death and injury. For correspondents, representing death and injury often conflicted with the imperative to portray war positively (Wilkinson 110). These aspects of war were not completely absent from press coverage, but reporters avoided detailed or graphic descriptions (118). Instead, war correspondents “wrote of wounds, mutilation and death in expurgated, distanced and sometimes symbolic terms. . . . Moreover, they tended to emphasise enemy rather than British corpses” (Stearn 151). Churchill applies the same strategies when depicting injury and death in *My Early Life*:

Two or three batteries and all the gunboats, at least thirty guns, opened an intense fire. Their shells shrieked towards us and burst in scores over the heads and among the masses of the White Flagmen. We were so close, as we sat spellbound on our horses, that we almost shared their perils. I saw the full blast of Death strike this human wall. Down went their standards by dozens and their men by hundreds. Wide gaps and shapeless heaps appeared in their array. One saw them jumping and tumbling under the shrapnel bursts; but none turned back. (*MEL* 197)

The spectacle was tragic. Through our glasses we could see the Boers’ heads and slouch hats in miniature silhouette, wreathed and obscured by shell-bursts, against the evening sky. Up the bare grassy slopes slowly climbed the brown figures and glinting

bayonets of the Irishmen, and the rattle of intense musketry drummed in our ears. The climbing figures dwindled; they ceased to move; they vanished into the darkening hillside. (*MEL* 338–39)

In these examples, Churchill aestheticises death while distancing readers from its physical horror. He uses various euphemisms for death and dying, such as “dwindled,” “ceased to move,” and “vanished”. Violence is depicted indirectly through movements, such as “jumping and tumbling,” rather than physical effects. The impact of weapons is “obscured by shell-bursts” and by the distance and the darkening sky. Bodies are abstracted into “shapeless heaps,” and individuals are collectivised into “masses of the White Flagmen,” a “human wall,” or “brown figures.” As Wilkinson notes, such depersonalisation was standard in war reporting, “further adding to the sense of complete removal and, in effect, distancing readers from the actual fate of individual soldiers” (113). British casualties, however, were treated differently in the press, often quantified and framed as a “cost” or “loss,” which “denied their actual fate, and made them appear as a necessary expenditure to be expected and budgeted” (121). Churchill’s accounts of British deaths are often matter-of-fact, as when he summarises that “[i]n all out of 310 officers and men the regiment had lost in the space of about two or three minutes five officers and sixty-five men killed and wounded, and 120 horses – nearly a quarter of its strength” (*MEL* 206). Taken together, these strategies aestheticise and abstract violence, preserving the romantic image of imperial warfare while erasing the suffering of individuals. Churchill does not merely recall his youthful perceptions of war; he actively reproduces the rhetorical practices of correspondence to glorify the imperial past.

In conclusion, Churchill’s memoir draws extensively on the standardised tropes of late Victorian and Edwardian war correspondence. The examples discussed here represent only a small selection from *My Early Life* and Churchill’s journalism, yet they demonstrate that his depiction of imperial warfare is shaped by the ideological and rhetorical frameworks of his earlier reporting. Churchill’s narrating “I” aestheticises, gamifies, and dramatises imperialism, producing a memoir in which readers are simultaneously distanced from and engaged by war. By covertly embedding war correspondence tropes within a genre premised on authentic self-disclosure, Churchill furthermore naturalises imperial narratives as personal experience rather than overt ideology. In the next section, I demonstrate how this glorification of war gives rise to Churchill’s adaptation of the war correspondent-as-hero archetype.

6.2 The War Correspondent as Imperial Hero

In many respects, the historical Churchill was not a typical war correspondent. His aristocratic background, dual role as soldier and correspondent, and overt self-publicity campaign distinguished him from most other professional journalists of his day (Griffiths, “Imperial Romance” 165; Knightley 67). Yet, as Griffiths writes, “[h]is adept exploitation of the imperial romance and the special correspondent persona was what gave him mass appeal” (165). This section examines how the Victorian “special correspondent persona” resurfaces in *My Early Life* and explores its larger implications for Churchill’s autobiographical and public image. I argue that Churchill’s memoir revives the script of the correspondent, a figure defined by courage and audacity, to construct a hybrid persona that anticipates his later myth as national leader.

As previously outlined, the Victorian war correspondent persona was characterised by adventure and heroism. The correspondent’s profile was that of a “rugged individual” (Williams, *New History* 18, 65) with soldier-like bravery and mental and physical toughness (Stearn 144; Moorcraft 22). As a contemporary source states,

The War Correspondent must have a frame of iron, with nerves of steel, the capacity to subsist on a meagre supply of inferior food for days in good condition, and to sleep at night in the open. He must have sound sense and rapid judgment, a quick observant eye, capable of taking in the ever-shifting scenes and changing incidents of a field of battle, and a capacity to convey his impressions readily and vividly to paper.
 (“The Rise and Fall of the War Correspondent” 390)

The role furthermore required competitiveness, daring, and a willingness to bend rules in pursuit of a good story (Stearn 144; Moorcraft 22). This professional culture fostered risk-seeking and incentivised correspondents to get close to the action (Best ix). Despite the official non-combatant status of war correspondents from 1879 onwards, correspondents thus often blurred the lines between observer and participant, emphasising personal dangers and involvement (Stearn 152; Best ix). As Korte notes, the Victorian war correspondent understood his role as extending far beyond merely reporting on battles; he regarded himself “as a player in the performance, acting with the same patriotism, honour and heroism as the soldiers” (72). The correspondent furthermore gained a symbolic status, perceived as “not only the representative of his paper but of his country” (Williams, *New History* 52). This prototype supplies Churchill with a ready-made script for heroism, patriotism, and personal involvement that he imports into his memoir.

Churchill's narrated "I" in *My Early Life* thoroughly embodies the Victorian war correspondent archetype. In his account of the years 1895 to 1900, he repeatedly recounts moments of close-quarters risk, recalling the sensations of being under fire and firing his pistol in self-defence (*MEL* 153, 205). The suspense is heightened when he loses his troop (149, 153, 204), his weapon (265), or even his horse (355). These crises are often resolved through narrow escapes: "But a disabling wound was the brightest prospect. I turned and, for the second time in this war, ran for my life on foot from the Boer marksmen, and I thought to myself, 'Here at last I take it.' Suddenly, as I ran, I saw a scout. He came from the left, across my front; a tall man, with skull and crossbones badge, and on a pale horse. Death in Revelation, but life to me!" (355). Apart from sheer luck, Churchill's survival and freedom frequently depend on his own ingenuity, most strikingly in his prison escape and multi-day flight through hostile territory with only "seventy-five pounds in my pocket and four slabs of chocolate" (286). Here, suspense derives not only from physical deprivation and exhaustion but from pursuit, heightened by the bounty on his head (304–05). His escape turns into a trial of willpower: "To be a fugitive, to be a hunted man, to be 'wanted', is a mental experience by itself. The risks of the battlefield, the hazards of the bullet or the shell are one thing. Having the police after you is another. The need for concealment and deception breeds an actual sense of guilt very undermining to morale" (304). Alongside these dramatisations of courage and determination, Churchill presents himself as a natural leader who assumes command in moments of chaos, most famously during the armoured train ambush, and again when he narrowly averts a second train disaster by ordering the train-driver to reverse (419). Such writing transforms war into an adventure narrative, in which dangers feel urgent and heightened, and the outcome hinges on the narrator's ability to stay calm and react swiftly. All the while, Churchill curates a romantic image of the correspondent "Riding sometimes quite alone across wide stretches of doubtful country . . . to keep up a continuous stream of letters and telegrams to my newspaper" (350). Taken together, these episodes show how Churchill emphasises risk, endurance, and triumph in order to present himself as a heroic adventurer.

Churchill's self-fashioning as a hero not only draws on correspondence stock images, but retrospectively emphasises his personal involvement and central role in events in alignment with the requirements of the memoir genre. This is particularly evident in his retelling of the armoured train incident. At this stage during the Boer War, Churchill had left

the army and was employed as a correspondent with civilian, non-combatant status (Knightley 67–68). The decision to accompany the armoured train was therefore not motivated by military duty, but, as Churchill explains, by “comradeship, and because I thought it was my duty to gather as much information as I could for the *Morning Post*, also because I was eager for trouble” (MEL 257). When the train is ambushed by the Boers, he immediately takes initiative to restore control:

As I passed the engine another shrapnel burst immediately as it seemed overhead, hurling its contents with a rasping rush through the air. The driver at once sprang out of the cab and ran to the shelter of the overturned trucks. His face cut open by a splinter streamed with blood, and he complained in bitter, futile indignation. ‘He was a civilian. What did they think he was paid for? To be killed by a bombshell – not he! He would not stay another minute.’ It looked as if his excitement and misery – he was dazed by the blow on his head – would prevent him from working the engine further, and as only he understood the machinery, the hope of escape would thus be cut off. So I told him that no man was hit twice on the same day: that a wounded man who continued to do his duty was always rewarded for distinguished gallantry, and that he might never have this chance again. On this he pulled himself together, wiped the blood off his face, climbed back into the cab of his engine, and thereafter obeyed every order which I gave him. I formed the opinion that it would be possible, using the engine as a ram, to pull and push the two wrecked trucks clear of the line, and consequently that escape for the whole force was possible. The line appeared to be uninjured, no rail had been removed. I returned along the line to Captain Haldane’s truck and told him through a loophole what was the position and what I proposed we should do. He agreed to all I said and undertook to keep the enemy hotly engaged meanwhile. I was very lucky in the hour that followed not to be hit. It was necessary for me to be almost continuously moving up and down the train or standing in the open, telling the engine-driver what to do. (MEL 259–60)

Churchill’s account emphasises the physical danger as well as his heroic role as a leader. Despite his non-combatant status, Churchill not only witnesses the event but actively intervenes. The juxtaposition with the fearful train driver, who initially refuses to act because of his civilian status, highlights Churchill’s bravery despite lethal risk. Moreover, he presents himself as the one persuading the train driver to act, devising the plan, and convincing his military superior, Captain Haldane, to adopt it. Here, he deviates from his earlier correspondence, in which he passively records the plan’s execution rather than his role as its architect:

As I passed the engine another shrapnel shell burst immediately, as it seemed, overhead, hurling its contents with a rasping rush through the air. The driver at once sprang out of the cab and ran to the shelter of the overturned trucks. His face was cut open by a splinter, and he complained in bitter futile indignation. He was a civilian.

What did they think he was paid for? To be killed by bombshells? Not he. He would not stay another minute. It looked as if his excitement and misery would prevent him from working the engine further, and as only he understood the machinery all chances of escape seemed to be cut off. Yet when this man, who certainly exhibited lively symptoms of terror, was told that if he continued to stay at his post he would be mentioned for distinguished gallantry in action he pulled himself together . . . Efforts were now made to clear the line completely of the wrecked trucks so that the engine and the two cars which still remained on the rails might escape. Meanwhile Captain Haldane endeavoured to keep down the enemy's artillery fire by the musketry of the Infantry in the rear armoured truck. ("Fate of the Armoured Train" 5–6)

This discrepancy suggests that Churchill either retrospectively embellished his own contribution or initially minimised his involvement to potentially avoid criticism for overstepping his role. The memoir preserves much of the original report but retells the same event as a decisive test of leadership and character. In this sense, the episode illustrates how *My Early Life* repurposes the war correspondent persona to retrospectively foreground specific character traits.

Churchill's mobilisation of the war correspondent archetype in *My Early Life* also exceeds its literal, biographical bounds. Although Churchill's time as a war correspondent constitutes a discrete phase in his early life, the correspondent persona colours Churchill's narrating and narrated selves throughout the memoir. War is a common theme throughout all chapters of *My Early Life*, which positions Churchill as a war correspondent even when recounting other parts of his life. When he looks back on his childhood, Churchill compares his experiences of school to war: examinations are described as "battlefields" (*MEL* 33); tutoring lessons resemble "artillery barrages" (37), where questions are "fired from carefully selected positions upon the areas . . . tenanted by large bodies of enemy troops" (37). In the same vein, politics is perceived as a "battle" (41, 234) or "fight" (234), as a "duelling-ground where although the business might be ruthless, and the weapons loaded with ball, there was ceremonious personal courtesy and mutual respect" (42). Churchill recalls having "fought up to the present fourteen contested elections" (234) and witnessing a debate in which "Mr. Chamberlain . . . was hit as if a bullet had struck him" (43). Even Churchill's relationship to his father is cast in diplomatic-military terms: "Just as friendly relations were ripening into an Entente, and an alliance or at least a military agreement seemed to my mind not beyond the bounds of reasonable endeavour, he vanished for ever" (54). These metaphors do not merely reveal a fondness for martial imagery. They demonstrate that Churchill's narrating self adopts

the interpretive position of a correspondent, casting himself as a hero in a life characterised by conflict, drama, and action. War correspondence provides a pre-existing cultural script through which Churchill interprets and organises his experience. Weidhorn has argued that war is a major theme throughout Churchill's literary oeuvre, that he was unable to write about his life outside of war, and that "[h]e deploys military imagery throughout his writing" (214–15). This perception of life as war blurs the boundaries between Churchill's different autobiographical and narrating selves, initially cast as "a child, a schoolboy, a cadet, a sub-altern, a war-correspondent, or a youthful politician" (*MEL* 5). According to Rose, Churchill's merging of roles established a pattern that would define his entire career:

Churchill . . . constructed a dual persona: the military adventurer dashing into battle, and the visionary statesman who (at one point or another) filled nearly every job in the British Cabinet. In either role, everything he did was transformed into reportage, memoir and history. There was no clear distinction between Churchill the soldier, Churchill the politician, and Churchill the author – all three were engaged in performing and publicizing a common narrative. (Rose 37)

Similarly, Churchill's autobiographical persona cannot be neatly separated from his correspondent persona. The memoir narrates Churchill's life through the gaze of the imperial reporter.

Seen in this light of merged roles, it is noteworthy that the qualities of the archetypal war correspondent – resilience, bravery, patriotism, quick judgement, and rhetorical skill – are also highly desirable qualities in a politician. In his account of the armoured train episode, for instance, Churchill not only presents himself as an ideal correspondent but as an ideal leader. His repurposing of the Victorian war correspondent persona may thus have served to advertise his character and suitability for leadership at a time when his political future was uncertain. Scholars disagree on whether the historical Churchill of 1930 still consciously intended to pursue a political career (Sell 248). Nevertheless, Woods and Weidhorn argue that the memoir helped maintain Churchill's public visibility during his period of political inactivity (Woods, *Artillery* 123; Weidhorn 7). In a study of British political memoirs, Toye observes that twentieth-century politicians increasingly used memoirs to positively shape their public reputations, albeit with varying success ("Political Memoirs" 78–79). He finds that Churchill represents a notable example of a politician whose autobiographical writing successfully bolstered his public standing (70). Whereas Churchill's World War memoirs served to defend his political actions (68), Toye notes that *My Early Life* "probably found more favour with

sensation-seeking readers due to its theatricality and melodrama” (69). By appealing to a different readership, Churchill may have been able to cultivate a more accessible public persona, extending his influence beyond political audiences to the general public. Such strategic literary self-presentation had characterised his career from the beginning. As Williams writes, Churchill “was able to construct a successful political career on the basis of the notoriety he gained as a war reporter . . . He took advantage of the heroic myth of the war reporter to promote his individual ambitions” (*New History* 8). In this light, *My Early Life* can be read as an effort to recycle a culturally available script of heroism as a resource for self-advertisement. There may have also been a longer-term purpose to Churchill’s memoir. Weidhorn argues that Churchill treated his books as “a series of impassioned missives addressed to posterity, . . . missives in which he deliberately shaped himself as a historical personage, as the man he imagined or wanted himself to be” (7). This historical personage, as this thesis has argued, can be traced back to the figure of the war correspondent.

In retrospect, the qualities of the Victorian war correspondent have since become ingrained in the mythical image of Churchill perpetuated by himself and by others. From today’s perspective, it is striking how seamlessly the qualities of the Victorian war correspondent were later transposed into the image of Churchill as heroic wartime leader and symbol of the nation associated with, as Fielding et al. note, “English exceptionalism” and “faith in the Empire” (31). Fielding et al. argue that Churchill consistently crafted his own myth throughout his life and his writings (11, 33–34). As a result, “mythic Churchill coexisted with his flesh-and-blood version, each playing off the other, and each driven by an unstated faith in the transcendent power of the masculine hero” (33). The figure of the heroic war correspondent, coupled with a romanticisation of British imperialism, can thus be interpreted as a prototype for the Churchill myth that persists today.

7. Conclusion

The memoir genre is marked by ambivalence: its claims to authentic self-disclosure are unsettled by narrative constraints, by the retrospective reconstruction of experience, and by its reliance on genre conventions that precede and exceed the individual life. Reading Churchill's *My Early Life* with attention to its incorporation of war correspondence shows how such tensions are amplified when a text engages with multiple genres at once. Rather than offering a transparent account of his early life, Churchill's memoir demonstrates how autobiographical identity emerges through intertextual negotiation and generic borrowing.

Based on the theoretical premises of intertextuality and genre theory, this thesis has examined how Churchill's auto-intertextual reuse of his war correspondence and its genre conventions impact his memoir and the autobiographical persona it produces. I have argued that Churchill's memoir does not simply plagiarise his war correspondence but is fundamentally shaped by its generic logic. His incorporation of war correspondence operates at multiple levels simultaneously: as a temporal framework imposing serial structure and immediacy, as source material providing authenticating detail, as a compromised archive requiring selective silence, and as a generic template supplying stock images of imperial warfare and the heroic correspondent persona. The result is a generically hybrid text in which the conventions of Victorian war correspondence actively construct both Churchill's autobiographical self and his romanticised vision of Britain's imperial past.

In Chapter 4, I have shown that Churchill narrates his past similarly to how a war correspondent observes the present: in short, open-ended serial instalments that privilege immediacy and scene over retrospective summary. Through vivid 'word-painting' inspired by his correspondence, Churchill reanimates the past, reliving events almost in real time and enabling readers to experience the past vicariously through his eyes. Yet this reanimation is framed by a pervasive rhetoric of loss. The era of Churchill's youth is repeatedly staged as irretrievably vanished and different from his inferior present of 1930. This dual temporality of distance and immediacy allows Churchill to position himself as both authentic eyewitness and surviving representative for lost Victorian imperial glory, a stance that becomes central to his autobiographical persona. The war correspondence genre, with its emphasis on virtual proximity, becomes a vehicle for this nostalgic project.

Chapter 5 has focused on *My Early Life*'s complex truth regime, showing how

Churchill's incorporation of war correspondence performs authenticity while concealing distortion. War correspondence, as an on-the-spot eyewitnessing account, provides realist detail to a genre otherwise reliant on distant and unreliable memory. By strategically marking his auto-intertextual reuse and incorporating particularly descriptive passages, Churchill's narrating "I" enhances the truth-effect of his account. Yet, because Churchill's source material was shaped by censorship, propaganda, and commercial sensationalism, he is ultimately using one compromised genre to authenticate another. A close comparison of the memoir and the original dispatches reveals that Churchill omits inconvenient truths. The constraints imposed on his war reporting by censors are sustained in the memoir, not through external coercion but through Churchill's own nostalgic and political commitments. The result is a text whose credibility rests not on transparency but on verisimilitude.

These structural, stylistic, and editorial aspects pave the way for Churchill's romanticised narrative of imperial warfare and his role as a war correspondent analysed in Chapter 6. Churchill's recollection of his years as a correspondent and soldier repeatedly draws on the familiar themes and motifs of late-Victorian war reporting, which work to present imperialism as both justified and beneficial. In doing so, he not only reproduces well-established war correspondence tropes but also reaffirms the ideological foundations of British imperialism. Churchill's autobiographical persona embodies the archetypal Victorian war correspondent, characterised by patriotism, courage, and composure under pressure. This persona, cultivated in an era of celebrity war journalism, supplies Churchill with a ready-made script for heroism. Yet Churchill's use of this archetype also exceeds its original bounds. By merging the roles of correspondent, soldier, politician, and memoirist and by extending military metaphors to his entire life, a hybrid identity is created in which all experience becomes warfare and all writing becomes reportage. The correspondent archetype thus becomes the foundation of Churchill's self-fashioning as eyewitness to history and voice of the nation.

The generic frictions identified throughout this thesis are not limitations of Churchill's memoir but sites of self-legitimation. The tension between journalism's immediacy and memoir's retrospection enables readers to vicariously experience a fictionalised past while accepting Churchill as its authoritative spokesman, the last representative of a vanished golden age. The excessive detail enabled by Churchill's archive of war letters violates the

norms of memory-based life writing, yet this very excess enhances the text's verisimilitude whilst reducing critical distance. The incorporation of censored, propagandistic source material into a genre premised on subjective truth has the effect of presenting imperial narratives as personal experience rather than overt ideology. In each case, generic hybridity has the effect of obscuring the ideological work of the text. As a result, Churchill's memoir presents him as the heroic embodiment of a romanticised imperial past, rather than a historically struggling politician. Auto-intertextual self-citation creates a sense of narrative continuity across Churchill's oeuvre, contributing to the myth of a coherent voice and persona. By re-purposing his earlier war correspondence in an account of personal formation, Churchill retrospectively authorises his younger self as the precursor of the statesman he would become.

As this thesis has shown, generic hybridity and auto-intertextuality are crucial concepts for understanding Churchill's literary persona and textual strategy. This offers a new perspective on a previously under-studied text and author. My analysis has been restricted to the interaction between two genres: war correspondence and memoir. Yet, as previously noted, Churchill also reworked his war correspondence into several campaign histories – *The Story of the Malakand Field Force* (1898), *The River War* (1899), *London to Ladysmith via Pretoria* (1900), and *Ian Hamilton's March* (1900) – before returning to the same material thirty years later in *My Early Life*. These history books constitute an additional layer of textual and generic mediation that may have shaped Churchill's recollection of his formative years. Future research could therefore explore how historiography functions as a bridge between journalism and memoir. The interrelation of the three genres could provide further insight into the complexities of Churchill's intergeneric myth-making.

Finally, I have argued that Churchill's heroic persona was not simply the product of his World War II leadership but had already begun to take shape decades earlier. *My Early Life*, written during Churchill's political exile, repurposes the conventions and celebrity culture of late Victorian war journalism to present a timeless heroic figure closely intertwined with nostalgia for the British Empire. These dimensions of Churchill's self-fashioning remain central to the modern Churchill myth. The Churchill we remember today is, in no small measure, the Churchill he wrote into being.

(Word Count: 30.122)

8. Works Cited

8.1 Primary Literature

- Churchill, Winston. "The Battle of Omdurman." *Morning Post*, 29 Sept. 1898, pp. 5–6. *British Newspaper Archive*.
- . "The Capture of Pretoria." *Morning Post*, 17 July 1900, pp. 7–8. *British Newspaper Archive*.
- . "Five Days' Action at Spion Kop." *Morning Post*, 17 Feb. 1900, p. 8. *British Newspaper Archive*.
- . "How I Escaped from Pretoria, and My Subsequent Adventures on the Road to Delagoa Bay." *Morning Post*, 24 Jan. 1900, pp. 5–6. *British Newspaper Archive*.
- . *My Early Life: A Roving Commission*. 1930. Reprint Society, 1944. *Bloomsbury eBooks complete*.
- . "The Relief of Ladysmith." *Morning Post*, 12 Apr. 1900, pp. 5–6.
- . "A Roving Commission." *Morning Post*, 14 May 1900, pp. 5–6.
- . "The Soudan Campaign: The Battlefield." *Morning Post*, 6 Oct. 1898, pp. 5–6. *British Newspaper Archive*.
- . "The Soudan Campaign: The City of Omdurman." *Morning Post*, 8 Oct. 1898, pp. 5–6. *British Newspaper Archive*.
- . "The Soudan Campaign: The Reconnaissance of Kerreri." *Morning Post*, 4 Oct. 1898, pp. 5–6. *British Newspaper Archive*.
- . "The Soudan Campaign: Reflections on the Cavalry Charge." *Morning Post*, 7 Oct. 1898, pp. 5–6. *British Newspaper Archive*.
- . "Two Days with Brabazon." *Morning Post*, 28 May 1900, pp. 5–6. *British Newspaper Archive*.
- . "With Headquarters: Fate of the Armoured Train." *Morning Post*, 1 Jan. 1900, pp. 5–6. *British Newspaper Archive*.

8.2 Secondary Literature

- Alkon, Paul Kent. *Winston Churchill's Imagination*. Bucknell UP, 2006.
- Alldritt, Keith. *Churchill the Writer: His Life as a Man of Letters*. Hutchinson, 1992.
- Allen, Graham. *Intertextuality*. 3rd ed., Routledge, 2021. *Taylor and Francis eBooks*.
- Ashley, Maurice. *Churchill as Historian*. Secker & Warburg, 1968.
- Bakhtin, M. M. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, edited by Michael Holquist, U of Texas P, 1981. *EBSCOhost eBooks*.
- Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author." *Readings in the Theory of Religion: Map, Text, Body*, edited by Scott S. Elliott and Matthew Waggoner, Routledge, 2016, pp. 141–45. *Taylor and Francis eBooks*, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315475615-11>.
- Beaumont, Jacqueline. "The British Press and Censorship during the South African War 1899–1902." *South African Historical Journal*, vol. 41, no. 1, 1999, pp. 267–89. *Taylor & Francis Journals Complete*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02582479908671894>.
- Best, Brian. *Fighting for the News: The Adventures of the First War Correspondents from Bonaparte to the Boers*. Frontline Books, 2016. *EBSCOhost eBooks*.

- Brockmeier, Jens. "Autobiographical Time." *Narrative Inquiry*, vol. 10, no. 1, Jan. 2000, pp. 51–73. *John Benjamins Journals*, <https://doi.org/10.1075/ni.10.1.03bro>.
- Broich, Ulrich. "Formen der Markierung von Intertextualität." *Intertextualität: Formen, Funktionen, anglistische Fallstudien*, edited by Ulrich Broich and Manfred Pfister, De Gruyter, 1985, pp. 31–47. *De Gruyter EBA Package*.
- . "Zur Einzeltextreferenz." *Intertextualität: Formen, Funktionen, anglistische Fallstudien*, edited by Ulrich Broich and Manfred Pfister, De Gruyter, 1985, pp. 48–52. *De Gruyter EBA Package*.
- Cannadine, David. "Winston Churchill as an Aristocratic Adventurer." *Aspects of Aristocracy: Grandeur and Decline in Modern Britain*, Yale UP, 1994, pp. 130–62.
- Churchill, Randolph S., editor. *The Churchill Documents: Youth 1874–1896*. C & T, 2018. *Bloomsbury Collections*.
- Clarke, Peter. *Mr Churchill's Profession: Statesman, Orator, Writer*. Bloomsbury, 2012.
- Cohen, Ronald I. *Bibliography of the Writings of Sir Winston Churchill*. Thoemmes Continuum, 2006. 3 vols.
- Conboy, Martin. *Journalism: A Critical History*. Sage, 2004. *EBSCOhost eBooks*.
- Couser, G. Thomas. "Genre Matters: Form, Force, and Filiation." *Life Writing*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2005, pp. 139–56. *Taylor & Francis Journals Complete*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10408340308518293>.
- . *Memoir: An Introduction*. Oxford UP, 2012. *EBSCOhost eBooks*.
- Depkat, Volker. "History." *Handbook of Autobiography/Autofiction*, edited by Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf, De Gruyter, 2019, pp. 73–81. *De Gruyter eBooks*.
- Dernbach, Beatrice. "(Un)reliable Narration in Journalism: The Fine Line between Fact and Fiction." *Unreliable Narration and Trustworthiness: Intermedial and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, edited by Vera Nünning, De Gruyter, 2015, pp. 305–28. *ProQuest Ebook Central eBooks*.
- Derrida, Jacques. "The Law of Genre." Translated by Avital Ronell. *Signature Derrida*, edited by Jay Williams, U of Chicago P, 2013, pp. 3–32. *EBSCOhost eBooks*.
- Dickinson, Hilary, and Michael Erben. "Nostalgia and Autobiography: The Past in the Present." *Auto/Biography*, vol. 14, no. 3, Sept. 2006, pp. 223–44. *CLOCKSS*, <https://doi.org/10.1191/0967550706ab048oa>.
- Duff, David. "Intertextuality versus Genre Theory: Bakhtin, Kristeva and the Question of Genre." *Paragraph*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2002, pp. 54–73. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43263675>.
- Dwyer, Philip. "Making Sense of the Muddle: War Memoirs and the Culture of Remembering." *War Stories: The War Memoir in History and Literature*, edited by Philip Dwyer, Berghahn, 2017, pp. 1–26. *EBSCOhost eBooks*.
- Egerton, George. Introduction. *Political Memoir: Essays on the Politics of Memory*, edited by George Egerton, Frank Cass, 1994, pp. xi–xix.
- Fielding, Steven, et al. *The Churchill Myths*. Oxford UP, 2020. *Oxford scholarship online eBooks complete*.
- Fludernik, Monika. "Time in Narrative." *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, edited by David Herman et al., Routledge, 2005, pp. 608–12.
- Frow, John. *Genre*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2015. *Taylor and Francis eBooks*.

- Gray, Jonathan. "Intertexts and Paratexts." *The Craft of Criticism*, edited by Michael Kackman and Mary Celeste Kearney, Routledge, 2018, pp. 207–18. *Taylor and Francis eBooks*.
- Griffiths, Andrew. *The New Journalism, the New Imperialism and the Fiction of Empire, 1870–1900*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.
- . "Winston Churchill, the *Morning Post* and the End of the Imperial Romance." *Victorian Periodicals Review*, vol. 46, no. 2, 2013, pp. 163–83. *Project Muse*, <https://doi.org/10.1353/vpr.2013.0016>.
- Hampton, Mark. *Visions of the Press in Britain, 1850–1950*. U of Illinois P, 2004.
- Hassan, Gerry. "Why Churchill Still Matters: The Power of the Past and the Postponement of the Future." *Soundings*, vol. 70, no. 70, Nov. 2018, pp. 67–81. *Gale Academic OneFile*, <https://doi.org/10.3898/SOUN.70.05.2018>.
- Helbig, Jörg. *Intertextualität und Markierung: Untersuchungen zur Systematik und Funktion der Signalisierung von Intertextualität*. Winter, 1996.
- Howarth, Herbert. "Behind Winston Churchill's Grand Style: Britain's Prophet of Doom and Defiance." *Commentary*, vol. 11, no. 6, June 1951, pp. 549–57. *ProQuest One Literature*, <https://uaccess.univie.ac.at/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/magazines/behind-winston-churchills-grand-style/docview/199525867/se-2?accountid=14682>.
- Hughes, Emily. "Nostalgia and Time." *The Routledge Handbook of Nostalgia*, edited by Tobias Becker and Dylan Trigg, Routledge, 2025, pp. 157–64. *Taylor and Francis eBooks*.
- Isekenmeier, Guido, et al. *Intertextualität und Intermedialität: Theoretische Grundlagen – Exemplarische Analysen*. J.B. Metzler, 2021. *Springer eBooks J.B. Metzler Geisteswissenschaften*.
- Jenny, Laurent. "The Strategy of Form." *French Literary Theory Today: A Reader*, translated by R. Carter, edited by Tzvetan Todorov, Cambridge UP, 1982, pp. 34–63.
- Juvan, Marko. "The Intertextuality of Genres and the Intertextual Genres." *Caietele Echinox*, vol. 16, June 2009, pp. 67–75. *EBSCOhost*, <https://web-p-ebsohost-com.uaccess.univie.ac.at/ehost/detail/detail?vid=7&sid=466d95e2-e8d0-4173-852b-af38eb8b76bc@redis&bdata=JkF1dGhUeXBIPWlwLHNNoaWlmc2l0ZT1laG9zdC1saXZl#AN=44571923&db=hsi>.
- Knightley, Phillip. *The First Casualty: From the Crimea to Vietnam: The War Correspondent as Hero, Propagandist and Myth Maker*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976.
- Korhonen, Kuisma. "General Introduction: The History/Literature Debate." *Tropes for the Past: Hayden White and the History/Literature Debate*, edited by Kuisma Korhonen, Rodopi, 2006, pp. 9–20. *Brill – All E-Book Titles*.
- Korte, Barbara. *Represented Reporters: Images of War Correspondents in Memoirs and Fiction*. Transcript, 2009. *De Gruyter eBooks complete*.
- Manchester, William. *The Last Lion: Winston Spencer Churchill: Visions of Glory 1874–1932*. 1983. Bantam, 2013.
- Mason, Jessica. *Intertextuality in Practice*. John Benjamins, 2019. *EBSCOhost eBooks*.
- Massantini, Leonardo. "Nostalgia and Autobiographical Memory." *The Routledge Handbook of Nostalgia*, edited by Tobias Becker and Dylan Trigg, Routledge, 2025, pp. 189–200. *Taylor and Francis eBooks*.

- Mathews, Joseph J. "Heralds of the Imperialistic Wars." *Military Affairs*, vol. 19, no. 3, 1955, pp. 145–55. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1982720>.
- Moorcraft, Paul. *Dying for the Truth: The Concise History of Frontline War Reporting*. Pen and Sword, 2016. *EBSCOhost eBooks*.
- Morgan, Kenneth O. "The Boer War and the Media (1899–1902)." *Twentieth Century British History*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2002, pp. 1–16. *Oxford University Press Journals*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/tcbh/13.1.1>.
- "Persona." *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford UP, Mar. 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/4253436465>. Accessed 30 Apr. 2025.
- Peters, John Durham. "Witnessing." *Media Witnessing: Testimony in the Age of Mass Communication*, edited by Paul Frosh and Amit Pinchevski, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, pp. 23–41. *ProQuest Ebook Central eBooks*.
- Pfister, Manfred. "Konzepte der Intertextualität." *Intertextualität: Formen, Funktionen, anglistische Fallstudien*, edited by Ulrich Broich and Manfred Pfister, De Gruyter, 1985, pp. 1–30. *De Gruyter EBA Package*.
- . "Zur Systemreferenz." *Intertextualität: Formen, Funktionen, anglistische Fallstudien*, edited by Ulrich Broich and Manfred Pfister, De Gruyter, 1985, pp. 52–58. *De Gruyter EBA Package*.
- Reynolds, David. "Winston Churchill, the Two World Wars and the Craft of Political Memoirs." *Politische Memoiren in Deutscher und Britischer Perspektive*, edited by Franz Bosbach and Magnus Brechtken, De Gruyter, 2005, pp. 119–32. *De Gruyter eBooks complete*.
- "The Rise and Fall of the War Correspondent." *Literary and Cultural Criticism from the Nineteenth Century: Volume III: Authorship, Journalism and the Nineteenth-Century Press*, edited by Joanne Shattock et al., Routledge, 2022, pp. 390–98. *Taylor & Francis eBooks*.
- Rose, Jonathan. *The Literary Churchill: Author, Reader, Actor*. Yale UP, 2014. *EBSCOhost Ebook Super Collection*.
- "Roving Commission." *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford UP, July 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1201621098>. Accessed 23 Feb. 2026.
- Sell, Roger D. "Churchill's *My Early Life* and Communicational Ethics." *Communicational Criticism: Studies in Literature as Dialogue*, John Benjamins, 2011, pp. 239–58.
- Smith, Sidonie, and Julia Watson. *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*. 2nd ed., U of Minnesota P, 2010. *ProQuest Ebook Central*.
- Spiers, Edward. *The Victorian Soldier in Africa*. Manchester UP, 2004. *Open Access eBooks von De Gruyter*.
- Stearn, Roger T. "War Correspondents and Colonial War, c. 1870–1900." *Popular Imperialism and the Military 1850–1950*, edited by John M. MacKenzie, Manchester UP, 1992, pp. 139–61.
- Sullivan, Charles R. "The Disenchanted Whiggism of Winston Churchill's *My Early Life*." *Journal of Historical Biography*, vol. 7, 2010, pp. 1–29, https://www.ufv.ca/jhb/Volume_7/Volume_7_Sullivan.pdf. Accessed 12 May 2024.
- Toye, Richard. "Political Memoirs and Diaries in the United Kingdom since 1900: Genre, Paratext, and Reputation Management." *Auto/Biography and Reputation Politics*, edited by Nadja Gernalzick et al., Routledge, 2026, pp. 65–85.

- . "'The Riddle of the Frontier': Winston Churchill, the Malakand Field Force and the Rhetoric of Imperial Expansion." *Historical Research*, vol. 84, no. 225, 2011, pp. 493–512. *Wiley Online Library*, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2281.2010.00557.x>.
- . *Winston Churchill: A Life in the News*. Oxford UP, 2020.
- . "Winston Churchill and the Golden Age of Journalism." *Winston Churchill: At War and Thinking of War before 1939*, edited by B.J.C. McKercher and Antoine Capet, Routledge, 2019, pp. 153–68. *Taylor and Francis eBooks*, <https://doi-org.uaccess.univie.ac.at/10.4324/9780429027642>.
- Vernon, Alex. "No Genre's Land: The Problem of Genre in War Memoirs and Military Autobiographies." *Arms and the Self: War, the Military, and Autobiographical Writing*, edited by Alex Vernon, Kent State UP, 2005, pp. 1–40.
- Wagner-Egelhaaf, Martina. "Introduction: Autobiography/Autofiction Across Disciplines." *Handbook of Autobiography/Autofiction*, edited by Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf, De Gruyter, 2019, pp. 1–7. *De Gruyter eBooks*.
- Waters, Catherine. "'Doing the Graphic': Victorian Special Correspondence." *Journalism and the Periodical Press in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, edited by Joanne Shattock, Cambridge UP, 2017, pp. 165–81. *Cambridge University Press eBooks*.
- . *Special Correspondence and the Newspaper Press in Victorian Print Culture, 1850–1886*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.
- Weidhorn, Manfred. *Sword and Pen: A Survey of the Writings of Sir Winston Churchill*. U of New Mexico P, 1974.
- Wilkinson, Glenn R. *Depictions and Images of War in Edwardian Newspapers, 1899–1914*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.
- Wilkinson-Latham, Robert. *From Our Special Correspondent: Victorian War Correspondents and Their Campaigns*. Hodder and Stoughton, 1979.
- Williams, Kevin. *A New History of War Reporting*. Routledge, 2020. *Taylor and Francis eBooks*.
- . *Read All about It! A History of the British Newspaper*. Routledge, 2010. *EBSCOhost eBooks*.
- Wilson, K. M. "The Fate of a Young Churchillian Conceit: 'The War on the Nile' Letters & the 'Morning Post'". *Victorian Periodicals Review*, vol. 18, no. 4, 1985, pp. 143–46. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20082173>.
- Woods, Frederick. *Artillery of Words: The Writings of Sir Winston Churchill*. Leo Cooper, 1992. *EBSCOhost eBooks*.
- . *A Bibliography of the Works of Sir Winston Churchill*. 2nd rev. ed., Kaye & Ward, 1975.
- , editor. *Winston S. Churchill: War Correspondent 1895–1900*. Brassey's, 1992.
- , editor. *Young Winston's Wars: The Original Despatches of Winston S. Churchill*. Sphere Books, 1972.

9. Appendix

9.1 Bibliography of War Correspondence by Winston Churchill

The following bibliography comprises Churchill's war letters published in the *Daily Graphic*, *Daily Telegraph*, and *Morning Post* between 1895 and 1900. Entries are listed chronologically by publication date and according to the location of the wars.

Cuba

- "The Insurrection in Cuba: Letters from the Front – I." *Daily Graphic*, 13 Dec. 1895, p. 4.
- "The Insurrection in Cuba: Letters from the Front – I." *Daily Graphic*, 17 Dec. 1895, p. 5.
- "The Insurrection in Cuba: Letters from the Front – III." *Daily Graphic*, 24 Dec. 1895, p. 4.
- "The Insurrection in Cuba: Letters from the Front – IV. The 'Battle' of La Reforma." *Daily Graphic*, 27 Dec. 1895, p. 4.
- "The Cuban Insurrection: A Sombre Outlook – Fifth and Concluding Letter." *Daily Graphic*, 13 Jan. 1896, p. 4.

India

- "On the Indian Frontier." *Daily Telegraph*, 6 Oct. 1897, p. 7.
- "The War in the Indian Highlands." *Daily Telegraph*, 7 Oct. 1897, p. 11.
- "The War in the Indian Highlands." *Daily Telegraph*, 8 Oct. 1897, p. 7.
- "The War in the Indian Highlands." *Daily Telegraph*, 9 Oct. 1897, p. 8.
- "War in the Indian Highlands." *Daily Telegraph*, 14 Oct. 1897, p. 6.
- "War in the Indian Highlands." *Daily Telegraph*, 15 Oct. 1897, p. 5.
- "The War in the Indian Highlands." *Daily Telegraph*, 26 Oct. 1897, p. 11.
- "The War in the Indian Highlands." *Daily Telegraph*, 2 Nov. 1897, p. 5.
- "The War in the Indian Highlands: 'The Imperial Question'." *Daily Telegraph*, 6 Nov. 1897, pp. 7–8.
- "The War in the Indian Highlands." *Daily Telegraph*, 9 Nov. 1897, p. 7.
- "The War in the Indian Highlands." *Daily Telegraph*, 13 Nov. 1897, pp. 7–8.
- "The War in the Indian Highlands." *Daily Telegraph*, 16 Nov. 1897, pp. 7–8.
- "The War in the Indian Highlands." *Daily Telegraph*, 19 Nov. 1897, p. 7.
- "The War in the Indian Highlands." *Daily Telegraph*, 3 Dec. 1897, p. 11.
- "The War in the Indian Highlands." *Daily Telegraph*, 6 Dec. 1897, p. 10.

Sudan⁴

- "The Soudan Campaign: The War on the Nile." *Morning Post*, 31 Aug. 1898, p. 5.
- "The Soudan Campaign: The War on the Nile." *Morning Post*, 2 Sept. 1898, p. 5.

⁴ Simon Read, in his incomplete bibliography accompanying *Winston Churchill Reporting* (2015), attributes two further anonymous articles to Churchill:

"The Fall of Omdurman." *Morning Post*, 5 Sept. 1898, p. 5.

"The Soudan Campaign: Khartoum Occupied." *Morning Post*, 7 Sept. 1898, p. 5.

Neither of them are listed in Wood's *A Bibliography of the Works of Sir Winston Churchill* (1975) or in Cohen's *Bibliography of the Writings of Sir Winston Churchill* (2006). Due to the lack of any clear stylistic or editorial markers, their authorial origin is questionable.

- “The Soudan Campaign: The Reconnaissance.” *Morning Post*, 23 Sept. 1898, p. 5.
- “The Soudan Campaign: The Battle.” *Morning Post*, 23 Sept. 1898, pp. 5–6.
- “The Soudan Campaign: The War on the Nile.” *Morning Post*, 24 Sept. 1898, pp. 5–6.
- “The Soudan Campaign: The War on the Nile.” *Morning Post*, 27 Sept. 1898, p. 5.
- “The Soudan Campaign: The War on the Nile.” *Morning Post*, 28 Sept. 1898, p. 5.
- “The Entry into Omdurman.” *Morning Post*, 29 Sept. 1898, p. 6.
- “The Battle of Omdurman.” *Morning Post*, 29 Sept. 1898, pp. 5–6.
- “The Soudan Campaign: On the Road to Omdurman.” *Morning Post*, 3 Oct. 1898, pp. 5–6.
- “The Soudan Campaign: The Reconnaissance of Kerreri.” *Morning Post*, 4 Oct. 1898, pp. 5–6.
- “The Soudan Campaign: After the Victory.” *Morning Post*, 6 Oct. 1898, p. 5.
- “The Soudan Campaign: The Battlefield.” *Morning Post*, 6 Oct. 1898, pp. 5–6.
- “The Soudan Campaign: Reflections on the Cavalry Charge.” *Morning Post*, 7 Oct. 1898, pp. 5–6.
- “The Soudan Campaign: The City of Omdurman.” *Morning Post*, 8 Oct. 1898, pp. 5–6.
- “The Soudan Campaign: Back from Omdurman.” *Morning Post*, 11 Oct. 1898, p. 5.
- “The Soudan Campaign: Civilisation Once More.” *Morning Post*, 13 Oct. 1898, p. 5.

South Africa

- “Steaming South: Incidents of the Voyage.” *Morning Post*, 18 Nov. 1899, pp. 7–8.
- “Arrival and Situation: The Man Who Knew.” *Morning Post*, 27 Nov. 1899, pp. 5–6.
- “The Southern Frontier: A Journey and Many Incidents.” *Morning Post*, 27 Nov. 1899, p. 6.
- “With Headquarters: To Pietermaritzburg.” *Morning Post*, 6 Dec. 1899, pp. 5–6.
- “With Headquarters: Cruise in the Armoured Train.” *Morning Post*, 7 Dec. 1899, pp. 7–8.
- “With Headquarters: Fate of the Armoured Train.” *Morning Post*, 1 Jan. 1900, pp. 5–6.
- “Prisoners of War.” *Morning Post*, 1 Jan. 1900, p. 6.
- “The Invasion of Natal: A Time of Crisis.” *Morning Post*, 23 Jan. 1900, pp. 5–6.
- “How I Escaped from Pretoria, and My Subsequent Adventures on the Road to Delagoa Bay.” *Morning Post*, 24 Jan. 1900, pp. 5–6.
- “In the British Lines Again.” *Morning Post*, 27 Jan. 1900, pp. 5–6.
- “With Headquarters: Christmas and New Year.” *Morning Post*, 5 Feb. 1900, p. 5.
- “With Headquarters: A Military Demonstration and Some Good News.” *Morning Post*, 6 Feb. 1900, pp. 7–8.
- “The Dash for Potgieter’s Ferry.” *Morning Post*, 13 Feb. 1900, pp. 7–8.
- “The Passage of the Tugela.” *Morning Post*, 17 Feb. 1900, pp. 7–8.
- “Five Days’ Action at Spion Kop.” *Morning Post*, 17 Feb. 1900, p. 8.
- “Spion Kop Dissolving Views.” *Morning Post*, 27 Feb. 1900, pp. 7–8.
- “A Week’s Rest.” *Morning Post*, 5 Mar. 1900, p. 5.
- “The Combat of Vaal Krantz.” *Morning Post*, 10 Mar. 1900, pp. 7–8.
- “On the Tugela.” *Morning Post*, 19 Mar. 1900, pp. 5–6.
- “The Victory of Monte Christo.” *Morning Post*, 27 Mar. 1900, pp. 7–8.
- “The Battle of Pieters: The Passage of the River.” *Morning Post*, 7 Apr. 1900, p. 7.
- “The Third Day at Pieters: Attack of the Irish Brigade.” *Morning Post*, 10 Apr. 1900, pp. 5–6.
- “The Anniversary of Majuba: Seventh Day’s Action at Pieters.” *Morning Post*, 11 Apr. 1900, p. 5.

- “The Relief of Ladysmith.” *Morning Post*, 12 Apr. 1900, pp. 5–6.
- “The Relief of Ladysmith: After the Siege.” *Morning Post*, 16 Apr. 1900, pp. 5–6.
- “A Roving Commission.” *Morning Post*, 14 May 1900, pp. 5–6.
- “At Half-Way House.” *Morning Post*, 17 May 1900, pp. 7–8.
- “Exit General Gatacre.” *Morning Post*, 21 May 1900, pp. 5–6.
- “Two Days with Brabazon.” *Morning Post*, 26 May 1900, pp. 7–8.
- “Two Days with Brabazon.” *Morning Post*, 28 May 1900, pp. 5–6.
- “The Dewetsdorp Episode.” *Morning Post*, 18 June 1900, pp. 5–6.
- “Ian Hamilton’s March: First Article.” *Morning Post*, 23 June 1900, pp. 7–8.
- “Ian Hamilton’s March: Last Article.” *Morning Post*, 25 June 1900, pp. 5–6.
- “Battle of Johannesburg.” *Morning Post*, 3 July 1900, pp. 7–8.
- “Concerning a Boer Convoy.” *Morning Post*, 12 July 1900, pp. 7–8.
- “The Capture of Pretoria.” *Morning Post*, 17 July 1900, pp. 7–8.
- “Action of Diamond Hills.” *Morning Post*, 20 July 1900, pp. 5–6.
- “Railway War.” *Morning Post*, 25 July 1900, pp. 5–6.

9.2 Abstracts

English Abstract

Despite being an extraordinarily prolific and Nobel Prize–winning author, Winston Churchill is not widely remembered for his literary achievements and few scholars have examined his writing in depth. Yet Churchill’s enduring public image was partly forged through his own literary works and continual recycling of his own texts across different genres. This thesis examines Churchill’s memoir *My Early Life: A Roving Commission* (1930) in auto-intertextual relation to his earliest writing as a war correspondent from 1895 to 1900. Drawing on intertextuality theory, genre theory, and life writing studies, I explore how Churchill’s war journalism shapes his memoir and the persona it constructs. Through close reading and comparative analysis, I demonstrate that *My Early Life* not only cites Churchill’s war reporting but is structurally and rhetorically dependent on it. The memoir adopts the temporal immediacy, serialised form, and rhetoric of Victorian war correspondence, along with the silences and constraints of censorship, to craft a nostalgic narrative of imperial adventure and heroism. These generic borrowings create tensions with the memoir genre, which promises retrospection and authentic self-disclosure. However, rather than undermining the text, such frictions enable Churchill to transform ephemeral reportage into an enduring self-portrait and to naturalise imperial narratives as personal memory. By merging the roles of correspondent, politician, and memoirist, Churchill constructs a hybrid persona that embodies Victorian ideals of imperial heroism. Ultimately, I argue that this self-portrayal persists in today’s mythologised image of Churchill as a British national hero.

German Abstract

Obwohl Winston Churchill ein außergewöhnlich produktiver Autor und Literaturnobelpreisträger war, ist er heutzutage kaum für seine literarischen Leistungen bekannt, und nur wenige Wissenschaftler*innen haben sich eingehend mit seinen Schriften befasst. Dabei wurde Churchills fortdauerndes öffentliches Image nicht zuletzt durch sein eigenes literarisches Schaffen und die kontinuierliche Wiederverwendung seiner Texte in verschiedenen Genres geprägt. Diese Arbeit untersucht Churchills Memoiren *My Early Life: A Roving Commission* (1930) in auto-intertextueller Beziehung zu seinen frühesten Schriften als Kriegskorrespondent von 1895 bis 1900. Auf der Grundlage von Intertextualitäts- und Genretheorie und Life Writing Studies untersuche ich, wie Churchills Kriegsjournalismus seine Memoiren und die darin konstruierte Persona prägt. Durch Close Reading und vergleichende Analyse zeige ich, dass *My Early Life* Churchills Kriegsberichterstattung nicht nur zitiert, sondern strukturell und rhetorisch davon abhängig ist. Churchills Memoiren übernehmen die zeitliche Unmittelbarkeit, die serialisierte Form und die Rhetorik der viktorianischen Kriegsberichterstattung sowie deren Zensurbeschränkungen, um eine nostalgische Erzählung von imperialen Abenteuern und Heldentum zu schaffen. Diese gattungsspezifischen Anleihen stehen in einem Spannungsverhältnis zum Genre der Memoiren, welches Retrospektion und authentische Selbstoffenbarung verspricht. Anstatt den Text zu untergraben, ermöglichen diese Reibungen es Churchill jedoch, flüchtige Reportagen in ein dauerhaftes Selbstporträt zu verwandeln und imperiale Narrative als persönliche Erinnerung zu naturalisieren. Durch die Verschmelzung der Rollen des Korrespondenten, Politikers und Memoirenschreibers konstruiert Churchill eine hybride Persona, die viktorianische Ideale imperialer Heldenhaftigkeit verkörpert. Letztlich argumentiere ich, dass diese Selbstdarstellung im heutigen mythologisierten Bild Churchills als britischer Nationalheld fortwirkt.